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Andrée encounters Gilbert and Trianon.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TRAP FOR PHILOSOPHERS.

On the summit of the hill, which the three botanists were ascending with some difficulty, stood one of those little rustic retreats, with gnarled and knotty pillars, pointed gables, and windows festooned with ivy and clematis, which are the genuine offspring of English architecture, or to speak more correctly, of English gardening, which imitates nature, or rather invents a species of nature for itself, thus giving a certain air of originality to its creations. The English have invented blue roses, and their greatest ambition has always been toward the antithesis of all received ideas. Some day they will invent black lilies.

This summer-house, which was large enough to contain a table and six chairs, was floored with tiles and carpeted with handsome matting. The walls were covered with little mosaics of flint picked up on the river's bank, mingled with foreign shells of the most delicate tints, gathered from the shores of the Indian Ocean.

The ceiling was in relief, and was composed of fir-cones and knotty excrescences of bark, arranged so as to imitate hideous profiles of fauns or savage animals, who seemed suspended over the heads of the visitors. The windows were each stained with some different shade, so that, according as the spectator looked out of the violet, the red, or the blue glass, the woods of Vesinet seemed tinted by a stormy sky, bathed in the burning rays of an August

sun, or sleeping beneath the cold and frosty atmosphere of December. The visitor had only to consult his taste, that is to say, choose his window, and look out.

This sight pleased Gilbert greatly, and he amused himself with looking through the differently tinted windows at the rich valley which lies stretched beneath the feet of a spectator situated on the hill of Luciennes, and at the noble Seine winding in the midst.

A sight nearly as interesting, however, at least in Monsieur de Jussieu's opinion, was the tempting breakfast spread in the centre of the summer-house, upon a table formed of gnarled and fantastic woodwork, on which the bark had been allowed to remain.

The exquisite cream for which Marly is celebrated, the luscious apricots and plums of Luciennes, the crisp sausages of Nanterre smoking upon a porcelain dish, — without any appearance of a servant bringing them, — strawberries peeping from a graceful little basket lined with vine-leaves, and beside the fresh and glistening pats of butter rolls of homely peasant bread, with its rich brown crust, so dear to the pampered appetite of the inhabitant of towns, — all this drew an exclamation of admiration from Rousseau, who, philosopher as he was, was not the less an unaffected gourmand; for his appetite was as keen as his taste was simple.

"What folly!" said he to Monsieur de Jussieu, "bread and fruit would have been sufficient; and even then, as true botanists and industrious explorers, we ought to have eaten the bread and munched the plums without ceasing our search among the grass or along the hedgerows. Do you remember, Gilbert, our luncheon at Plessis-Piquet?"

"Yes, Monsieur, — the bread and cherries which appeared to me so delicious."

"Yes, that is how true lovers of Nature should breakfast."

"But, my dear master," interrupted Monsieur de Jussieu, "if you reproach me with extravagance, you are wrong; a more modest meal was never — "

"Oh!" cried the philosopher, "you do your table injustice, Seigneur Lucullus."

"My table? — by no means," said Jussieu.

"Who are our hosts, then?" resumed Rousseau, with a smile which evinced at once good humor and constraint, — "sprites?"

"Or fairies!" said Monsieur de Jussieu, rising, and glancing stealthily toward the door.

"Fairies?" exclaimed Rousseau, gayly, — "a thousand blessings on them for their hospitality! I am hungry. Come, Gilbert, fall to;" and he cut a very respectable slice from the brown loaf, passing the bread and the knife to his disciple. Then, while taking a huge bite, he picked out some plums from the dish.

Gilbert hesitated.

"Come, come!" said Rousseau. "The fairies will be offended by your stiffness, and will imagine you are dissatisfied with their banquet."

"Or that it is unworthy of you, gentlemen," uttered a silvery voice from the door of the pavilion, where two young and lovely women appeared arm in arm, smiling, and making signs to Monsieur de Jussieu to moderate his obeisances.

Rousseau turned, holding the half-tasted bread in his right hand, and the remains of a plum in his left; and beholding these two goddesses, — at least such they seemed to him by their youth and beauty, — he remained stupefied with astonishment, bowing mechanically, and retreating toward the wall of the summer-house.

"Oh, Countess!" said Monsieur de Jussieu, "you here? What a delightful surprise!"

"Good-day, my dear botanist," said one of the ladies, with a grace and condescension quite regal.

"Allow me to present Monsieur Rousseau to you," said Jussieu, taking the philosopher by the hand which held the brown bread.

Gilbert also had seen and recognized the ladies. He opened his eyes to their utmost width, and, pale as death, looked out of the window of the summer-house, with the idea of throwing himself from it.

"Good-day, my little philosopher," said the other lady to the almost lifeless Gilbert, patting his cheek with her rosy fingers.

Rousseau saw and heard; he was almost choking with rage. His disciple knew these goddesses, and was known to them. Gilbert was almost fainting.

"Do you not know Madame la Comtesse, Monsieur Rousseau?" asked Jussieu.

"No," he replied, thunderstruck; "it is the first time, I think —"

"Madame Dubarry," continued Monsieur de Jussieu.

Rousseau started up as if he stood on a red-hot ploughshare. "Madame Dubarry!" he exclaimed.

"Myself, Monsieur," said the young lady, with surpassing grace, "who is most happy to have received in her house and to have been favored with a near view of one of the most illustrious thinkers of the age."

"Madame Dubarry!" continued Rousseau, without remarking that his astonishment was becoming a grave offence against good-breeding. "She! and doubtless this pavilion is hers, and doubtless it is she who has provided this breakfast."

"You have conjectured rightly, my dear philosopher,

— she and her sister," continued Jussieu, ill at ease in presence of this threatening storm.

"Her sister, who knows Gilbert!"

"Intimately, Monsieur," replied Chon, with that saucy boldness which respected neither royal whims nor philosophers' fancies.

Gilbert looked as if he wished the earth would open and swallow him, so fiercely did Rousseau's eye rest upon him.

"Intimately?" repeated Rousseau; "Gilbert knew Madame intimately, and I was not told of it? But in that case I was betrayed, I was sported with!"

Mademoiselle Chon and her sister looked at each other with a malicious smile. Monsieur de Jussieu in his agitation tore a Malines ruffle which was worth at least forty louis-d'or.

Gilbert clasped his hands as if to entreat Chon to be silent, or Monsieur Rousseau to speak more graciously to him. But, on the contrary, it was Rousseau who was silent, and Chon who spoke.

"Yes," said she, "Gilbert and I are old friends; he was a guest of mine. Were you not, little one? What! are you already ungrateful for the dainties of Luciennes and Versailles?"

This was the final blow; Rousseau's arms fell stiff and motionless. "Oh!" said he, looking askance at the young man, "that was the way, was it, you little scoundrel?"

"Monsieur Rousseau!" murmured Gilbert.

"Why, one would think you were weeping for the little tap I gave your cheek," continued Chon. "Well, I always feared you were ungrateful."

"Mademoiselle!" entreated Gilbert.

"Little one," said Madame Dubarry, "return to

Luciennes; your bonbons and Zamore await you, and though you left it in rather a strange manner, you will be well received."

"Thank you, Madame!" said Gilbert dryly; "when I leave a place it is because I do not like it."

"And why refuse the favor that is offered to you?" interrupted Rousseau, bitterly. "You have tasted of wealth, my dear Gilbert, and you had better return to it."

"But, Monsieur, when I swear to you —"

"Go, go! I do not like those who blow hot and cold with the same breath."

"But you will not listen to me, Monsieur Rousseau!"

"Well?"

"I ran away from Luciennes, where I was kept locked up."

"A trap, — I know the malice of men!"

"But since I preferred you to them, since I accepted you as my host, my protector, my master —"

"Hypocrisy!"

"But, Monsieur Rousseau, if I wished for riches, I should accept the offer these ladies have made me."

"Monsieur Gilbert, I have been often deceived, but never twice by the same person. You are free; go where you please."

"But where in the world shall I go?" cried Gilbert, plunged in an abyss of despair; for he saw his window, and the neighborhood of Andrée, and his love, lost to him forever. His pride was hurt at being suspected of treachery; and the idea that his self-denial, his long and arduous struggle against the indolence and the passions natural to his age, was misconstrued and despised, stung him to the quick.

"Where?" said Rousseau. "Why, in the first place,

to this lady, of course. Where could you find a lovelier or more worthy protector?"

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Gilbert, burying his head in his hands.

"Do not be afraid," said Monsieur de Jussieu, deeply wounded, as a man of the world, by Rousseau's strange sally against the ladies; "you will be taken care of, and whatever you may lose in one way, will be amply made good to you."

"You see," said Rousseau, bitterly, "there is Monsieur de Jussieu, a learned man, a lover of Nature, — one of your accomplices," added he, with a grin which was meant for a smile, "who promises you assistance and fortune; and you may be sure that what Monsieur de Jussieu promises he can perform."

As he spoke, Rousseau, no longer master of himself, bowed to the ladies with a most majestic air, did the same to Monsieur de Jussieu, to the latter's consternation, and then, with a tragic air and without even looking at Gilbert, he left the pavilion.

"Oh! what an ugly animal a philosopher is!" said Chon, coolly, looking after the Genevese, who walked, or rather stumbled, down the path.

"Ask what you wish," said Monsieur de Jussieu to Gilbert, who still kept his face buried in his hands.

"Yes, ask, Monsieur Gilbert," added the countess, smiling on the abandoned disciple.

The latter raised his pale face, pushed back the hair which perspiration and tears had matted over his forehead, and said with a firm voice: "Since you are kind enough to offer me an employment, I would wish to be an assistant-gardener at Trianon."

Chon and the countess looked at each other, and the former, with her tiny little foot, touched her sister's with a

triumphant glance. The countess made a sign with her head that she understood.

"Is that practicable, Monsieur de Jussieu?" asked the countess; "I should wish it very much."

"If you wish it, Madame," replied he, "it is done."

Gilbert bowed, and put his hand upon his heart, which now bounded with joy as a few moments before it had been overwhelmed with grief.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE APOLOGUE.

In that little cabinet at Luciennes where we have seen the Vicomte Jean Dubarry imbibe so much chocolate, to the great annoyance of the countess, the Maréchal de Richelieu was lunching with Madame Dubarry, who, while amusing herself with pulling Zamore's ears, carelessly reclined upon a couch of brocaded satin, while the old courtier uttered sighs of admiration at each new position the charming creature assumed. "Oh, Countess!" said he, smirking like an old woman, "your hair is falling down; look, there is a ringlet drooping on your neck. Ah! your slipper is falling off, Countess."

"Bah! my dear Duke, never mind," said she, absently, and pulling a handful of hair from Zamore's head while she lay back at full length on the couch, more lovely and fascinating than Venus on her shell.

Zamore, entirely insensible to these graceful attitudes, bellowed with anger. The countess endeavored to quiet him by taking a handful of sugar-plums from the table and filling his pockets with them. But Zamore was sulky, turned his pocket inside out, and emptied his sugar-plums upon the carpet.

"Oh, the little scoundrel!" continued the countess, stretching out her tiny foot till it came in contact with the fantastic hose of the little negro.

"Oh, have mercy!" cried the old marshal; "upon my faith, you will kill him!"

"Why cannot I kill everything which displeases me to-day?" said the countess. "I feel merciless!"

"Oh!" said the duke, "then perhaps I displease you."

"Oh, no! quite the contrary; you are an old friend, and I adore you. But the fact is, I believe I am going mad."

"Can it be that those whom you have made mad have smitten you with their complaint?"

"Take care! you provoke me horribly with your gallant speeches, of which you do not believe one word."

"Countess, Countess! I begin to think you are not mad, but ungrateful."

"No, I am neither mad nor ungrateful; I am —"

"Well, confess! What are you?"

"I am angry, Duke."

"Really?"

"Are you surprised at that?"

"Not in the least, Countess; upon my honor, you have reason to be so."

"Ah! that is what annoys me in you, Marshal."

"Then there is something in my conduct which annoys you, Countess?"

"Yes."

"And what is this something, if you please? I am rather old to begin to correct my faults, and yet there is no effort I would not make for you."

"Well, it is that you do not even know what is the cause of my anger, Marshal."

"Oh! but I do."

"You know what vexes me?"

"Of course I do! Zamore has broken the Chinese fountain."

An imperceptible smile played around the young

countess's mouth; but Zamore, who felt himself guilty, drooped his head humbly, as if the skies were pregnant with clouds of blows and kicks.

"Oh, yes!" said the Countess, with a sigh, "yes, Duke, you are right, — that is it; and in truth you are a very deep politician."

"I have always been told so, Madame," replied Monsieur de Richelieu, with an air of profound modesty.

"Oh! I can see that without being told, Duke. Have you not guessed the cause of my annoyance immediately, without looking to the right or left? It is superb."

"Superb indeed; but still that is not all."

"Indeed!"

"No, I divine something else."

"And what do you divine?"

"That you expected his Majesty last evening."

"Where?"

"Here."

"Well, what then?"

"And that his Majesty did not come."

The countess reddened, and raised herself slightly upon her elbow.

"Oh!" said she.

"And meantime," said the duke, "I have come from Paris."

"Well, what does that prove?"

"*Pardieu!* that I could not, of course, know what took place at Versailles; and yet —"

"My dear Duke, you are full of mystery to-day. When a person begins, he should finish, or else he should not have commenced."

"You speak quite at your ease, Countess. Allow me, at least, to take breath. Where was I?"

"You were at — 'and yet.'"

"Oh, yes! true; and yet I not only know that his Majesty did not come, but also why he did not come."

"Duke, I have always thought you a sorcerer; but the proof was lacking."

"Well, that proof I will now give you."

The countess, who attached much more interest to this conversation than she wished to let appear, relinquished her hold of Zamore's head, in whose hair her long taper fingers had been carelessly playing.

"Give it, Duke, give it!" said she.

"Before the governor?" asked the duke.

"Vanish, Zamore!" said the countess to the negro boy, who, mad with delight, made only one bound from the boudoir to the antechamber.

"An excellent step," murmured Richelieu; "then I must tell you all, Countess?"

"What! did that monkey Zamore embarrass you, Duke?"

"To tell the truth, Countess, any one can embarrass me."

"Yes, I can understand that; but is Zamore any one?"

"Zamore is neither blind, deaf, nor dumb; therefore he is some one. I distinguish by the title of some one every person who is my equal in the hearing, seeing, and speaking faculties, every person who can see what I do, hear and repeat what I say, — every person, in short, who might betray me. This theory established, I proceed."

"Yes, yes, Duke, pray proceed; you will gratify me exceedingly."

"Gratify! I think not, Countess; but no matter, I must go on. Well, the king was at Trianon yesterday."

"The little or the great Trianon."

"The little. The dauphiness was leaning on his arm."

"Ah!"

"And the dauphiness, who is charming, as you know —"

"Alas!"

"Coaxed him so much, with dear papa here, and dear papa there, that his Majesty, who has a heart of gold, could not resist her. So, after the walk came supper, and after supper amusing games; so that, in short —"

"In short," said Madame Dubarry, pale with impatience, "in short, the king did not come to Luciennes, — that is what you would say?"

"Exactly."

"Oh! it is easily explained; his Majesty found there all that he loves."

"Ah! by no means, and you are far from believing one word of what you say; all that pleases him he found, no doubt."

"Take care, Duke, that is much worse; to sup, chat, and play is all that he wants. And with whom did he play?"

"With Monsieur de Choiseul."

The countess made an angry gesture.

"Shall I not pursue the subject further, Countess?" asked Richelieu.

"On the contrary, Monsieur, speak on."

"You are as courageous, Madame, as you are witty; let me therefore take the bull by the horns, as the Spaniards say."

"Madame de Choiseul would not forgive you for that proverb, Duke."

"It is, however, not applied to her husband. I must tell you, then, Madame, that Monsieur de Choiseul, since I must name him, held the cards; and with so much good fortune, so much address —"

"That he won."

"By no means, — that he lost, and that his Majesty

won a thousand louis-d'or at piquet, — a game on which his Majesty prides himself very much, seeing that he plays it very badly."

"Oh, that Choiseul, that Choiseul!" murmured Madame Dubarry. "But Madame de Grammont was of the party also, was she not?"

"That is to say, Countess, she was paying her respects before her departure."

"The duchess!"

"Yes; she is very foolish, I think."

"Why so?"

"Finding that no one persecutes her, she pouts; finding that no one exiles her, she exiles herself."

"Where to?"

"To the provinces."

"She is going to plot."

"*Parbleu!* what else would you expect her to do? Well, as she was about to set out, she very naturally wished to take leave of the dauphiness, who besides is very fond of her. That is why she was at Trianon."

"The great?"

"Of course. The little Trianon is not yet furnished."

"Ah! her Highness the Dauphiness, by surrounding herself with all these Choiseuls, shows plainly which party she intends to embrace."

"No, Countess, do not let us exaggerate; to-morrow the duchess will have departed."

"And the king was amused where I was absent!" cried the countess, with indignation not unmixed with terror.

"Yes; it is incredible, Countess, but still it is so. Well, what do you conclude from it?"

"That you are well informed, Duke."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Finish, then."

"I gather from it that we shall all be lost if we do not rescue the king from the clutches of these Choiseuls, either with his consent or without it."

"Alas!"

"I say we," resumed the countess, — "but do not fear, Duke; I speak only of our own family."

"And your friends, Countess; permit me to claim that title. So then —"

"Then you are one of my friends?"

"I think I have said so, Madame."

"That is not enough."

"I think I have proved it."

"That is better. And you will assist me?"

"With all my power, Countess; but —"

"But what?"

"I cannot conceal from you that the task is difficult."

"Are these Choiseuls positively not to be rooted out, then?"

"They are firmly planted, at least."

"Then, whatever our friend La Fontaine may say, neither wind nor storm can prevail against this oak?"

"The minister is a lofty genius."

"Bah! you speak like an encyclopedist!"

"Am I not a member of the Académie?"

"Oh! you are slightly so."

"True, you are right; my secretary is the member, not I. But, nevertheless, I maintain my opinion."

"That Monsieur de Choiseul is a genius?"

"Eh! yes."

"But may I ask in what does this mighty genius shine?"

"In this, Madame, that he has made such a piece of work with the parliament and the English that the king cannot do without him."

"The parliament? Why, he excites it against his Majesty."

"Of course; therein lies his cleverness."

"He provokes the English to war."

"Of course. Peace would ruin him."

"That is not genius, Duke."

"What is it then, Countess?"

"It is high treason."

"When high treason is successful, Countess, it is genius, and genius of a lofty description."

"But by that mode of reasoning I know some one who is as great a genius as Monsieur de Choiseul."

"Bah!"

"As regards the parliament, at least."

"You puzzle me, Countess."

"Do you not know him, Duke? He belongs to your own family."

"Can I have a man of genius in my family? Do you speak of my uncle, the cardinal duke, Madame?"

"No; I mean the Duc d'Aiguillon, your nephew."

"Ah! Monsieur d'Aiguillon. Yes, true, it was he who set that affair of La Chalotais moving. 'Pon honor, he is a brave youth. Yes, true; that was a tough piece of work. Countess, there is a man whom a woman of spirit should attach to her interests."

"Are you aware, Duke," said the countess, "that I do not know your nephew?"

"Indeed, Madame, you don't know him?"

"No; I have never seen him."

"Poor fellow! In fact, I now remember that since you came to court he has always been at Brittany. Let him

look to himself when he first sees you; he has not latterly been accustomed to the sun."

"What does he do among all those black gowns, — a nobleman of spirit like him?"

"He revolutionizes them, not being able to do better. You understand, Countess, every one takes his pleasure where he can find it, and there is not much pleasure to be had in Brittany. Ah! he is an active man. *Peste!* what a servant the king might have in him, if he wished. Parliament would not be insolent to him. Oh! he is a true Richelieu. Permit me, therefore, Countess —"

"What?"

"To present him to you on his first appearance."

"Does he intend to visit Paris soon?"

"Oh! Madame, who knows? Perhaps he will have to remain in Brittany another lustre, as that scoundrel Voltaire says; perhaps he is on his way hither; perhaps two hundred leagues off; perhaps at the barrier."

And while he spoke, the marshal studied the lady's features, to see what effect his last words produced. But after having reflected for a moment, she said: "Let us return to the point where we left off."

"Wherever you please, Countess."

"Where were we?"

"At the moment when his Majesty was enjoying himself so much at Trianon in the company of Monsieur de Choiseul."

"And when we were speaking of getting rid of this Choiseul, Duke?"

"That is to say, when you were speaking of getting rid of him, Countess."

"Oh! I am so anxious that he should go," said the favorite, "that I think I shall die if he remains. Will you not assist me a little, my dear Duke?"

"Oh!" said Richelieu, bridling; "in politics that is called an overture."

"Take it as you will, call it what you please, but answer categorically."

"Oh, what a long, ugly adverb in such a pretty little mouth!"

"Do you call that answering, Duke?"

"No, not exactly; I call that preparing my answer."

"Is it prepared?"

"Wait a little."

"You hesitate, Duke?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, I am listening."

"What do you think of apologues, Countess?"

"Why, that they are very antiquated."

"Bah! the sun is antiquated also, and yet we have not invented any better means of light."

"Well, let me hear your apologue, then; but let it be clear."

"As crystal. Let us suppose, then, Countess — You know one always supposes something in an apologue."

"How tiresome you are, Duke."

"You do not believe one word of what you say, Countess, for you never listened to me more attentively."

"I was wrong, then; go on."

"Suppose, then, that you were walking in your beautiful garden at Luciennes, and that you saw a magnificent plum, — one of those Queen Claudes which you are so fond of, because their vermilion and purple tints resemble your own."

"Go on, flatterer."

"Well, I was saying, suppose you saw one of these plums at the extremity of one of the loftiest branches of the tree, what would you do, Countess?"

"I would shake the tree, to be sure!"

"Yes, but in vain, for the tree is large and massive, and not to be rooted out, as you said just now; and you would soon perceive that, without even succeeding in shaking it, you would tear your charming little hands against its rough bark. And then you would say, reclining your head to one side in that adorable manner which belongs only to you and the flowers, 'Oh, how I wish I had that plum upon the ground!' and then you would get angry."

"That is all very natural, Duke."

"I shall certainly not be the person to contradict you."

"Go on, my dear Duke; your apologue is exceedingly interesting."

"All at once, when turning your little head from side to side, you perceive your friend the Duc de Richelieu, who is walking behind you, thinking."

"Of what?"

"What a question! *Pardieu!* of you. You say to him with your heavenly voice, 'Oh, Duke, Duke!'"

"Well?"

"'You are a man; you are strong; you took Mahon. Shake this devil of a plum-tree for me, that I may have that provoking plum! Is not that it, Countess?"

"Exactly, Duke; I repeated that to myself while you were saying it aloud. But what did you reply?"

"Reply? Oh, I replied, 'How you run on, Countess! Certainly nothing could give me greater pleasure; but only see how firm the tree is, how knotty the branches! I have a sort of affection for my hands as well as you have for yours, though mine are fifty years older than yours.'"

"Ah!" said the Countess, suddenly, "yes, yes; I comprehend."

"Then finish the apologue. What did you say to me?"

"I said, 'My little Marshal, do not look with indifferent eyes upon this plum, which you look at indifferently only because it is not for you. Wish for it along with me, my dear Marshal; covet it along with me. And if you shake the tree properly, if the plum falls, then we will eat it together.'"

"Bravo!" exclaimed the duke, clapping his hands.

"Is that it?"

"Faith, Countess, there is no one like you for finishing an apologue. By mine horns, as my deceased father used to say, it is right well tricked out!"

"You will shake the tree, Duke?"

"With two hands and three hearts, Countess."

"And the plum was really a Queen Claude?"

"I am not quite sure of that, Countess."

"What was it, then?"

"Do you know, it seemed much more like a portfolio dangling from the tree."

"Then we will divide the portfolio."

"Oh, no! for me alone. Do not envy me the morocco, Countess. There will fall so many beautiful things from the tree along with the portfolio, when I shake it, that you will not know how to choose."

"Then, Marshal, it is a settled affair?"

"I am to have Monsieur de Choiseul's place?"

"If the king consents."

"Does not the king do all you wish?"

"You see plainly he does not, since he will not send this Choiseul away."

"Oh! I trust that the king will gladly recall his old companion."

"And you ask nothing for the Duc d'Aiguillon?"

"No, faith; the rascal can ask for himself."

"Besides, you will be there. And now it is my turn to ask."

"That is but just."

"What will you give me?"

"Whatever you wish."

"I want everything."

"That is reasonable."

"And shall I have it?"

"What a question! But will you be satisfied at least and ask me for nothing further?"

"Only that, and something more."

"Speak."

"You know Monsieur de Taverney?"

"He is a friend of forty years' standing."

"He has a son?"

"And a daughter. Well?"

"That is all."

"How! all?"

"Yes; the other demand I have to make shall be made in proper time and place. In the mean time, we understand each other, Duke?"

"Yes, Countess."

"Our compact is signed."

"Nay, more, it is sworn."

"Then shake the tree for me."

"Oh, rest satisfied! I have the means."

"What are they?"

"My nephew."

"What else?"

"The Jesuits."

"Oh! ho!"

"I have a very nice little plan already formed."

"May I know it?"

"Alas! Countess —"

"Well, you are right."

"You know, secrecy —"

"Is half the battle. I complete your thought for you."

"You are charming."

"But I wish to shake the tree also."

"Oh! very well, shake away, Countess; it can do no harm."

"But when will you begin to undermine, Duke?" asked the countess.

"To-morrow. And when do you begin to shake?"

A loud noise of carriages was heard in the courtyard, and almost immediately cries of "Long live the king!" rose on the air.

"I?" said the countess, glancing at the window, "I will begin immediately."

"Bravo!"

"Retire by the little staircase, Duke, and wait in the courtyard. You shall have my answer in an hour."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE EXPEDIENT OF HIS MAJESTY LOUIS XV.

Louis XV. was not so easy tempered that one could talk politics with him every day; for in truth, politics were his aversion, and when he was in a bad temper he always avoided that subject with this argument, which admitted of no reply: "Bah! the machine will last as long as I shall."

When circumstances were favorable, it was necessary to take advantage of them; but it rarely happened that the king did not regain the advantage which a moment of good-humor had caused him to lose. Madame Dubarry knew her king well, and like fishermen well skilled in the dangers of the sea, she never attempted to start in bad weather. Now, the present visit of his Majesty to Luciennes was one of the best opportunities possible. The king had done wrong the previous day, and knew beforehand that he should receive a scolding; he would therefore be an easy prey.

But however confiding the game for which the hunter lies in wait, it has always a certain instinct which must be taken into account. But this instinct is set at nought if the sportsman knows how to thwart it. The countess managed the royal game she had in view and which she wished to capture, in the following manner.

We have said that she was in a most becoming morning-dress, like those in which Boucher represents his

shepherdesses. Only she had no rouge on, for Louis XV. had an antipathy to rouge. The moment his Majesty was announced she seized her pot of rouge and began to rub her cheeks vigorously. The king saw what the countess was doing from the anteroom. "Fie!" said he, as he entered, "how she daubs herself!"

"Ah! good-day, Sire," said the countess, without interrupting her occupation even when the king kissed her on the neck.

"You did not expect me, it seems, Countess?" asked the king.

"Why do you think so, Sire?"

"Because you soil your face in that manner."

"On the contrary, Sire, I was certain that I should have the honor of receiving your Majesty in the course of the day."

"Ah! how you say that, Countess!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, you are as serious as Monsieur Rousseau when he is listening to his own music."

"That is because I have serious things to say to your Majesty."

"Ah, good! I see what is coming, Countess."

"Really?"

"Yes, — reproaches."

"I reproach you, Sire? — and why, if you please?"

"Because I did not come yesterday."

"Oh, Sire, do me the justice not to imagine that I pretend to monopolize your Majesty."

"My little Jeanne, you are getting angry."

"Oh! no, Sire, I am angry already."

"But hear me, Countess; I assure you I have not ceased thinking of you."

"Pshaw!"

"And the evening seemed interminable to me."

"But once more, Sire, I am not speaking of that at all. Your Majesty may spend your evenings where you please, without consulting any one."

"Quite a family party, Madame; only my own family."

"Sire, I have not even inquired."

"Why not?"

"What! you know it would be very unbecoming for me to do so."

"Well," said the king, "if you are not displeased with me about that, what is it, then? We must be just in this world."

"I have no complaint to make against you, Sire."

"But since you are angry —"

"Yes, I am angry, Sire, that is true; but it is at being made a make-shift."

"You a make-shift? Good heavens!"

"Yes, I! The Comtesse Dubarry, the beautiful Jeanne, the charming Jeannette, the fascinating Jeanneton, as your Majesty calls me, — I am a make-shift!"

"But how?"

"Because I have my king, my lover, only when Madame de Choiseul and Madame de Grammont do not want him."

"Oh! oh! Countess —"

"My faith! I speak right out what is in my heart. Hold, Sire. They tell me that Madame de Grammont has often watched for your entrance to your bedchamber. Well, I will take a course just contrary to that of the noble duchess, — I will watch for the coming out; and the first Choiseul or Grammont that falls into my hands — so much the worse, by my faith!"

"Countess, Countess!"

"Oh! what can you expect? I am an uneducated

woman. I am the mistress of Blaise, — the beautiful Bourbonnaise, you know."

"Countess, the Choiseuls will avenge themselves."

"What matter, if they avenge themselves for my vengeance?"

"They will despise you."

"You are right. Well, I have an excellent plan, which I shall carry into execution at once."

"And that is?" asked the king, uneasily.

"Simply to go away."

The king shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah! you do not believe me, Sire?"

"No, indeed!"

"That is because you do not take the trouble to reason; you confound me with others."

"How so?"

"Madame de Châteauroux wanted to be a goddess; Madame de Pompadour aimed at being a queen; others wished to be rich, powerful, or to humiliate the ladies of the court by the weight of their favors. I have none of these defects."

"That is true."

"But yet I have many good qualities."

"That is also true."

"You do not think a word of what you say."

"Oh, Countess! no one knows your worth better than I do."

"Well, but listen. What I am going to say will not alter your conviction."

"Speak."

"In the first place, I am rich, and independent of every one."

"Do you wish to make me regret that, Countess?"

"Then I have not the least ambition for all that flatters

these ladies, the least desire for what they aim at; my only wish is to love sincerely him whom I have chosen, whether he be a soldier or a king. When I love him no longer, I care for nothing else."

"Let me trust you care a little for me yet, Countess."

"I have not finished, Sire."

"Proceed, Madame."

"I am pretty, I am young, and may reasonably hope for ten years more of beauty; and the moment I cease to be your Majesty's favorite, I shall be the happiest and most honored woman in the world. You smile, Sire. I am sorry to tell you it is because you do not reflect. When you had had enough, and your people too much, of your other favorites, you sent them away, and your people blessed you and execrated the disgraced favorite more than ever; but I will not wait until I am sent away. I will leave the place, and make it known publicly that I have left it. I will give a hundred thousand francs to the poor; I will retire to a convent for a week; and in less than a month my portrait will be hung up in all the churches as that of a repentant Magdalen."

"Oh, Countess! you do not speak seriously?" said the king.

"Look at me, Sire, and see whether I am serious or not. I swear to you that I never was more serious in my life."

"Then you will commit this folly, Jeanne? But do you not see that by so doing you place yourself at the mercy of my whim, Madame la Comtesse?"

"No, Sire; to do so would be to say, 'Choose between this and that;' whereas I say, 'Adieu, Sire!' — nothing more."

The king turned pale, but this time with anger. "If you forget yourself so far, Madame, take care."

"Of what, Sire?"

"I will send you to the Bastille, and you will find the Bastille rather more tiresome than a convent."

"Oh, Sire!" said the countess, clasping her hands, "if you would but do me that favor, it would delight me!"

"Delight you? How so?"

"Yes, indeed. My secret ambition has always been to be popular, like Monsieur de la Chalotais, or Monsieur de Voltaire. I only want the Bastille for that. A little of the Bastille, and I shall be the happiest of women. I can then write memoirs of myself, of your ministers, of your daughters, of yourself, and transmit the virtues of Louis the Well-Beloved to the remotest posterity. Give me the *lettre-de-cachet*, Sire. Here, I will provide the pen and ink." And she pushed a pen and an inkstand which were upon the work-table toward the king.

The king, thus braved, reflected a moment, then, rising, "Very well, Madame," said he: "adieu."

"My horses!" cried the countess. "Adieu, Sire."

The king made a step toward the door.

"Chon!" said the countess.

Chon entered.

"My trunks, my travelling equipage, and post-horses," said she. "Quick! lose no time!"

"Post-horses!" said Chon, startled. "Good heavens! what is the matter?"

"We must leave this as quickly as possible, my dear, else the king will send us to the Bastille. There is no time to be lost. Make haste, Chon, make haste!"

This reproach stung Louis to the heart. He approached the countess and took her hand. "Forgive my warmth, Countess," said he.

"In truth, Sire, I am surprised you did not threaten me with the gibbet."

"Oh, Countess!"

"Of course. Thieves are always hanged."

"Thieves?"

"Yes; do I not steal the Comtesse de Grammont's place?"

"Countess!"

"Certainly! that is my crime, Sire."

"Be just, Countess; you irritated me."

"And how?"

The king took her hands. "We were both wrong. Let us forgive each other."

"Are you serious in your wish for a reconciliation, Sire?"

"On my honor."

"Go, Chon."

"Without ordering anything?" asked Chon.

"No, order what I told you."

"Countess!"

"But let them wait for fresh orders."

"Ah!"

Chon left the room.

"Then you wish me to remain?" said the countess.

"Above all things."

"Reflect on what you say, Sire."

The king reflected, but he could not retract; besides, he wanted to see how far the requirements of the victor would go.

"Speak," said he.

"Immediately. Mark, Sire! I was going away without asking anything."

"I observed it."

"But if I remain, I shall ask for something."

"Well, what is it? It is only necessary to know what it is."

"Ah! you know very well."

"No."

"Yes, for you make a grimace."

"Monsieur de Choiseul's dismissal, is it?"

"Exactly."

"It is impossible, Countess."

"My horses, then."

"But, ill-natured creature that you are —"

"Sign my *lettre-de-cachet* for the Bastille, or the letter which dismisses the minister."

"There is a middle course," said the king.

"Thanks for your clemency, Sire; it seems I shall be permitted to go without being arrested."

"Countess, you are a woman."

"Fortunately I am."

"And you talk politics like an angry, rebellious woman. I have no grounds for dismissing Monsieur de Choiseul."

"I understand he is the idol of the parliament; he encourages them in their revolt."

"But there must be some pretext."

"A pretext is the reason of the weak."

"Countess, Monsieur de Choiseul is an honest man, and honest men are rare."

"Honest! he sells you to the gentlemen of the black robe, who swallow up all the gold in the kingdom."

"No exaggeration, Countess."

"Half, then."

"Good heavens!" cried Louis XV., with vexation.

"Yes, I know," cried the countess, "I am very foolish. What are parliaments, Choiseuls, governments, to me? What is the king to me, when I am only his make-shift?"

"Again!"

"Always, Sire."

"Give me two hours to consider, Countess."

"Ten minutes, Sire. I will retire into my apartment;

slip your answer under the door. There are pen, ink, and paper. If in ten minutes you have not replied, and replied as I wish, adieu; think no more of me, — I shall have gone. Otherwise — "

"Otherwise?"

"Pull at the bobbin, and the latch will fly up."

Louis XV. kissed the hands of the countess, who, like the Parthian, threw back her most fascinating smile on him as she left the room. The king made no opposition to her withdrawal, and the countess entered the adjoining chamber and shut the door. Five minutes afterward a folded paper grazed the silken mat and the rich carpet beneath the door. The countess eagerly devoured the contents of the letter, hastily wrote some words with a pencil on a scrap of paper, and opening the window, threw the paper to Monsieur de Richelieu, who was walking in the little courtyard under an awning, in great trepidation lest he should be seen, and keeping himself out of view as much as possible.

The marshal unfolded the paper, read it, and in spite of his sixty-five years hastily ran to the large courtyard and jumped into his carriage. "Coachman," said he, "to Versailles, as quick as possible!"

The paper which was thrown to Monsieur de Richelieu from the window contained only these words: "I have shaken the tree; the portfolio has fallen!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW KING LOUIS XV. TRANSACTED BUSINESS.

THE next day there was a great commotion at Versailles. Whenever two courtiers met, there was nothing but mysterious signs and significant shakes of the hand, or else folded arms and upward looks expressive of grief and surprise.

Monsieur de Richelieu, with a number of his partisans, was in the king's antechamber at Trianon at about ten o'clock. The Count Jean, all bedizened with lace and quite dazzling, conversed with the old marshal, and conversed gayly, if his joyous face could be trusted as evidence.

At about eleven o'clock the king passed quickly through the gallery and entered the council-chamber, without speaking to any one.

At about five minutes past eleven Monsieur de Choiseul alighted from his carriage and crossed the gallery with his portfolio under his arm. As he passed through the throng, there was a hurried movement among the courtiers, who all turned round as if talking among themselves, in order to avoid bowing to the minister. The duke paid no attention to this manœuvre; he entered the closet where the king was turning over some papers while sipping his chocolate.

"Good morning, Duke," said the king, familiarly; "are we feeling well this morning?"

"Sire, Monsieur de Choiseul is quite well, but the minister is very ill, and comes to request that your Majesty, since you have not yet spoken, will accept his resignation. I thank the king for permitting me to take the initiative in this matter; it is a last favor, for which I am deeply grateful."

"What, Duke! — your resignation? What does that mean?"

"Sire, your Majesty yesterday signed for Madame Dubarry an order which deposes me. This news is already spread all over Paris and Versailles. The evil is done; nevertheless, I was unwilling to leave your Majesty's service without receiving a formal order with the permission. For, nominated officially, I can consider myself dismissed only by an official act."

"What, Duke!" exclaimed the king, laughing, — for the severe and lofty attitude of Monsieur de Choiseul made him almost tremble, — "did you, a man of genius, and skilled in official forms, did you believe that?"

"But, Sire," said the surprised minister, "you have signed —"

"What?"

"A letter, in the possession of Madame Dubarry."

"Ah, Duke! have you never felt the want of peace? You are most fortunate! Madame de Choiseul must indeed be a model."

The duke, offended by the comparison, frowned. "Your Majesty," said he, "has too much firmness of character, and above all, too much tact and discretion, to mix up affairs of state with what you deign to call household matters."

"Choiseul, I must tell you how that affair happened; it is very amusing. You are aware that you are very much feared in that quarter."

"Rather say hated, Sire."

"Hated, if you will. Well, this madcap countess left me no alternative but to send her to the Bastille or to thank you for your services."

"Well, Sire?"

"Well, Duke, you must confess that it would have been a pity to lose the sight which Versailles presents this morning. I have been amused since yesterday with seeing the couriers depart in all directions, and watching the faces brighten up or lengthen. Since yesterday Cotillon III. is queen of France. It is exceedingly amusing."

"But the end of all this, Sire?"

"The end, my dear Duke," said the king, seriously, "the end will always be the same. You know me; I always seem to yield, but I never yield. Let the women swallow the honored morsel I throw them now and then, as to another Cerberus; but let us live quietly, uninterruptedly, always together. And since we are on the chapter of explanations, keep this one for yourself. Whatever report you may hear, whatever letter you may receive from me, do not absent yourself from Versailles. As long as I continue to say to you what I now do, Duke, we shall be good friends."

The king extended his hand to his minister, who bowed over it, without gratitude and without anger.

"And now, my dear Duke, let us to business."

"At your Majesty's pleasure," replied the minister, opening his portfolio.

"Well, tell me something of these fireworks, to begin with."

"Ah! that was a great disaster, Sire."

"Whose fault was it?"

"Monsieur Bignon's, the provost of the merchants."

"Did the people cry out very much?"

"Oh, very much!"

"Then perhaps we had better dismiss this Monsieur Bignon."

"One of the members of parliament was nearly killed in the mêlée, and his colleagues took up the matter warmly. But the advocate-general, Séguier, made a very eloquent speech to prove that this misfortune was the work of fate alone. His speech was applauded, and so the affair is over for the present."

"So much the better! Let us pass to the parliament, Duke. Ah! we are reproached in that quarter."

"I am blamed, Sire, for not supporting Monsieur d'Aiguillon against Monsieur de la Chalotais. But who blames me? The very people who carried your Majesty's letter about with all the demonstrations of joy. Remember, Sire, that Monsieur d'Aiguillon overstepped the bounds of his authority in Brittany, that the Jesuits were really exiled, and that Monsieur de la Chalotais was right. Your Majesty has publicly acknowledged the innocence of the attorney-general. The king cannot thus be made to stultify himself. To his minister that is nothing, but to his people —!"

"In the mean time the parliament feels itself strong?"

"And it is strong. How can it be otherwise? The members are reprimanded, imprisoned, persecuted, and then declared innocent! I do not accuse Monsieur d'Aiguillon of having initiated this affair of Chalotais, but I can never forgive him for having been on the wrong side of it."

"Oh, come, Duke! the evil is done; think of the remedy. How can we bridle those insolent fellows?"

"Let the intrigues of the chancellor cease, let Monsieur d'Aiguillon have no more support, and the anger of the parliament will at once subside."

"But that would be to yield, Duke."

"Then your Majesty is represented by Monsieur d'Aiguillon, and not by me?"

This was a home-thrust, and the king felt it. "You know," said he, "I do not like to affront my servants, even when they have been in the wrong. But no more of this unfortunate business; time will decide who is right. Let us speak of foreign affairs. I am told we shall have a war?"

"Sire, if there be war, it will be a just and necessary war."

"With the English — the devil!"

"Does your Majesty fear the English?"

"Oh! upon the sea — "

"Your Majesty may rest tranquil My cousin the Duc de Praslin, your minister of marine, will tell you that he has sixty-four men-of-war, not including those which are on the stocks. Besides, there are materials sufficient to construct twelve more in a year. Then there are fifty first-rate frigates, — a respectable force with which to meet a naval war. For a Continental war we have more than all that, — we have the remembrance of Fontenoi."

"Very well; but why must I fight the English, my dear Duke? A much less skilful minister than you, the Abbé Dubois, always avoided a war with England."

"I daresay, Sire. The Abbé Dubois received from the English six hundred thousand francs a month."

"Oh, Duke!"

"I have the proof, Sire."

"Well, be it so. But where are the grounds for war?"

"England covets all the Indies; I have been obliged to give the most stringent and hostile orders to your officers there. The first collision will call forth demands for redress from England; my official advice is that we do not

listen to them. Your Majesty's Government must make itself respected by force, as it formerly was through corruption."

"Oh, let us be patient! Who will know what happens in India? It is so far from here!"

The duke bit his lips. "There is a *casus belli* nearer home, Sire," said he.

"Another! What is that?"

"The Spaniards claim the Malouine and Falkland Islands. The port of Egmont was arbitrarily occupied by the English; the Spaniards drove them from it by main force. The English are enraged; they threaten the Spaniards with instant war if they do not give them satisfaction."

"Well! but if the Spaniards are in the wrong, let them unravel the knot themselves."

"And the family compact, Sire? Why did you insist on the signing of this compact, which allies so closely all the Bourbons in Europe against English encroachment?"

The king hung his head.

"Do not be uneasy, Sire," continued Choiseul; "you have a formidable army, an imposing fleet, and sufficient money. I can raise enough without making the people cry out. If we have a war, it will be an additional glory to your Majesty's reign, and it will furnish the pretext and excuse for several aggrandizements which I have in view."

"But in that case, Duke, we must have peace in the interior; let there not be war everywhere."

"But the interior is quiet, Sire," replied the duke, affecting not to understand.

"No, no! you see plainly it is not. You love me, and serve me well. Others say they love me, and their conduct does not at all resemble yours. Let there be con-

cord between all shades of opinion; let me live happily, my dear Duke."

"It is not my fault, Sire, if your happiness is not complete."

"That is the way to speak. Well, come, then, and dine with me to-day."

"At Versailles, Sire?"

"No; at Luciennes."

"I regret exceedingly, Sire, that I cannot; but my family is in great alarm on account of the reports which were spread yesterday. They think I am in disgrace with your Majesty, and I cannot let so many loving hearts suffer."

"And do those of whom I speak not suffer, Duke? Remember how happily we three used to live together in the time of the poor Marchioness."

The duke drooped his head, his eyes dimmed, and he uttered a half-suppressed sigh. "Madame de Pompadour was extremely jealous of your Majesty's glory," he said, "and had lofty political ideas. I confess that her character sympathized strongly with my own. Often, Sire, I was joined with her in the great enterprises she undertook. Yes, we understood each other."

"But she meddled with politics, Duke, and every one blamed her for it."

"True!"

"This other, on the contrary, is mild as a lamb; she has never yet asked me for a single *lettre-de-cachet*, even against the pamphleteers and sonnet-writers. Well, they reproach her as if she followed in the other's footsteps. Oh, Duke, it is enough to disgust one with progress! Come, will you make your peace at Luciennes?"

"Sire, deign to assure the Comtesse Dubarry that I esteem her as a charming woman, and well worthy of the king's love; but —"

"Ah! a but, Duke —"

"But," continued Monsieur de Choiseul, "my conviction is that if your Majesty is necessary for the welfare of France, a good minister is of more importance to your Majesty in the present juncture than a charming mistress."

"Let us speak no more of it, Duke, and let us remain good friends. But calm Madame de Grammont, and let her not lay any more plots against the Countess; the women will embroil us."

"Madame de Grammont, Sire, is too anxious to please your Majesty; that is her failing."

"But she displeases me by annoying the Countess, Duke."

"Well, Madame de Grammont is going, Sire; we shall see her no more. That will be an enemy the less."

"I did not mean that; you go too far. But my head burns, Duke; we have worked this morning like Louis XIV. and Colbert, — quite in the style of the *grand siècle*, as the philosophers say. By the way, Duke, are you a philosopher?"

"I am your Majesty's humble servant," replied Monsieur de Choiseul.

"You charm me; you are an invaluable man. Give me your arm, — I am quite giddy."

The duke hastened to offer his arm to his Majesty. He understood that the folding-doors would be thrown open, that the whole court was in the gallery, and that he would be seen in this triumphant position. After having suffered so much, he was not sorry to make his enemies suffer in their turn. The usher, in fact, now opened the doors and announced the king in the gallery.

Louis XV. crossed the gallery leaning heavily on Monsieur de Choiseul's arm, talking and smiling, without remarking, or seeming to remark, how pale Jean Dubarry was, and how red Monsieur de Richelieu. But Monsieur

de Choiseul saw these shades of expression very well. With elastic step, lofty head, and sparkling eyes, he passed before the courtiers, who now approached as eagerly as they had before kept away.

"There," said the king, at the end of the gallery, "wait for me; I will take you with me to Trianon. Remember what I have told you."

"I have treasured it up in my heart," replied the minister, well knowing what a sting this cutting sentence would inflict on his enemies.

The king once more entered his apartments.

Monsieur de Richelieu broke the file, and hastened to press the minister's hand between his meagre fingers, exclaiming, "I have known for a long time that a Choiseul bears a charmed life."

"Thank you!" said the duke, who knew how the land lay.

"But this absurd report?" continued the marshal.

"The report made his Majesty laugh," said Choiseul.

"I heard something of a letter —"

"A little joke of the king's," replied the minister, glancing, while he spoke, at Jean, who lost countenance.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" repeated the marshal, turning to the viscount as soon as the Duc de Choiseul was out of sight.

The king descended the staircase, calling the duke, who eagerly followed him.

"We have been tricked," said the marshal to Jean.

"Where are they going?"

"To the little Trianon, to amuse themselves at our expense."

"Hell and furies!" exclaimed Jean. "Ah, pardon me, Marshal!"

"It is now my turn," said the latter. "We shall see if my plans are more successful than those of the countess."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LITTLE TRIANON.

When Louis XIV. had built Versailles, and had felt the inconvenience of grandeur, when he saw the immense salons full of guards, the ante-rooms thronged with courtiers, the corridors and entresols crowded with footmen, pages, and officers, he said to himself that Versailles was indeed what Louis XIV. had planned, and what Mansard, Le Brun, and Le Nôtre had executed, — a sojourn for a god, but not a habitation for a man. Then the Grand Monarque, who deigned to be a man in his leisure moments, built Trianon, that he might breathe more freely and enjoy a little retirement. But the sword of Achilles, which had fatigued even Achilles himself, was an insupportable burden to his puny successor.

Trianon, the miniature replica of Versailles, seemed yet too pompous to Louis XV., who caused the little Trianon, a pavilion of sixty feet square, to be built by the architect Gabriel.

To the left of this building was erected an oblong square structure without character and without ornament; this was the dwelling of the servants and officers of the household. It contained about ten lodgings for masters, and had accommodation for fifty servants. This building still remains entire, and is composed of a ground-floor, a first story, and attics. This ground-floor is protected by a paved moat, which separates it from the plantation; and

all the windows in it, as well as those of the first-floor, are grated. On the side next Trianon the windows admit light to a long corridor, like that of a convent.

Eight or nine doors opening from the corridor give entrance to the different suites of apartments, each consisting of an ante-room and two closets, one to the left, the other to the right, and of one, and sometimes two, rooms in the basement, looking upon the inner court of the building. Over the basement are the kitchens, and in the attics the chambers of the domestics. Such is the little Trianon.

Add to this a chapel about forty yards from the chateau, which we shall not describe, because there is no necessity for our doing so, and because it is too small to deserve our notice.

The topography of the establishment is therefore as follows: a chateau looking with its large eyes upon the park and wood in front, and on the left looking toward the offices, which present only barred windows, — the windows of the corridors or of the kitchens, masked by a thick trellis.

The path leading from the great Trianon, the established residence of Louis XIV., to the little, was through a kitchen-garden which connected the two residences by means of a wooden bridge. It was through this kitchen and fruit garden, which La Quintinie had designed and planted, that Louis XV. conducted Monsieur de Choiseul to the little Trianon after the laborious council we have just mentioned. He wished to show him the improvements he had made in the new abode of the dauphin and dauphiness.

Monsieur de Choiseul admired everything and commented upon everything with the sagacity of a courtier. He listened while the king told him that the little Trianon

became every day more beautiful, more charming to live in; and the minister added that it would serve as his Majesty's private residence.

"The dauphiness," said the king, "is rather timid yet, like all young Germans; she speaks French well, but she is afraid of a slight accent, which to French ears betrays the Austrian. At Trianon she will see only friends, and will speak only when she wishes."

"The result will be that she will speak well. I have already had the honor to remark," said Monsieur de Choiseul, "that her Royal Highness is accomplished, and needs nothing to make her perfect."

On the way the two travellers found the dauphin standing motionless upon a lawn, measuring the sun's altitude. Monsieur de Choiseul bent low; but as the dauphin did not speak to him, he did not speak to the dauphin.

The king said, loud enough to be heard by his grandson, "Louis is a finished scholar, but he is wrong thus to run his head against the sciences; his wife will suffer for it."

"By no means, Sire," replied a low, soft voice issuing from a thicket; and the king saw the dauphiness running toward him. She had been talking to a man provided with papers, compasses, and chalk.

"Sire," said the princess, "Monsieur Mique, my architect."

"Ah!" exclaimed the king, "then you, too, are bitten by that mania, Madame?"

"Sire, it runs in the family."

"You are going to build?"

"I am going to improve this great park, in which every one gets wearied."

"Oh, oh! my dear daughter, you speak too loud; the dauphin might hear you."

"It is a matter agreed upon between us, my father," replied the princess.

"To be wearied?"

"No; but to try to amuse ourselves."

"And so your Highness is going to build?" asked Monsieur de Choiseul.

"I intend making a garden of this park, Monsieur le Duc."

"Ah! poor Le Nôtre!" said the king.

"Le Nôtre was a great man, Sire, for what was in vogue then; but for what I love—"

"What do you love, Madame?"

"Nature."

"Ah! like the philosophers."

"Or like the English."

"Good! Say that before Choiseul, and you will have a declaration of war immediately. He will let loose upon you the sixty-four ships and forty frigates of his cousin, Monsieur de Praslin."

"Sire," said the dauphiness, "I am going to have a natural garden laid out here by Monsieur Robert, who is the cleverest man in the world in that particular branch of horticulture."

"And what do you call a natural garden?" asked the king. "I thought that trees and flowers and even fruit such as I gathered as I came along, were natural objects."

"Sire, you may walk a hundred years in your grounds, and you will see nothing but straight alleys, or thickets cut off at an angle of forty-five degrees, as the dauphin says, or pieces of water wedded to lawns, which in their turn are wedded to perspectives, parterres, or terraces."

"Well, that is ugly, is it?"

"It is not natural."

"There is a little girl who loves Nature!" said the

king, with a jovial rather than a joyous air. "Well, come; what will you make of my Trianon?"

"Rivers, cascades, bridges, grottos, rocks, woods, ravines, houses, mountains, fields."

"For dolls?" said the king.

"Alas! Sire, for kings such as we shall be," replied the princess, without remarking the blush which overspread her grandfather's face, and without perceiving that she foretold a sad truth for herself.

"Then you will destroy; but what will you build?"

"I shall preserve the present buildings."

"Ah! your people may consider themselves fortunate that you do not intend to lodge them in these woods and rivers you speak of, like Hurons, Esquimaux, and Greenlanders. They would live a natural life there, and Monsieur Rousseau would call them children of Nature. Do that, my child, and the encyclopedists will adore you."

"Sire, my servants would be too cold in such lodgings."

"Where will you lodge them, then, if you destroy all? Not in the palace; there is scarcely room for you two there."

"Sire, I will keep the offices as they are;" and the dauphiness pointed to the windows of the corridor which we have described.

"What do I see there?" said the king, shading his eyes with his hand.

"A woman, Sire," said Monsieur de Choiseul.

"A young lady whom I have taken into my household," replied the dauphiness.

"Mademoiselle de Taverney," said Choiseul, with his piercing glance.

"Ah!" said the king; "so you have the Taverneys here?"

"Only Mademoiselle de Taverney, Sire."

"A charming girl! What do you make of her."

"My reader."

"Very good," said the king, without taking his eye from the window through which Mademoiselle de Taverney, still pale from her illness, was looking very innocently, and without in the least suspecting that she was observed.

"How pale she is," said Monsieur de Choiseul.

"She was nearly killed on the 30th of May. Monsieur le Duc."

"Indeed? Poor girl!" said the king. "That Monsieur Bignon deserves to be disgraced."

"She is quite well again?" said Monsieur de Choiseul, hastily.

"Thank God, yes, Monsieur le Duc!"

"Ah!" said the king, "she has fled."

"She has perhaps recognized your Majesty; she is very timid."

"Has she been with you long?"

"Since yesterday, Sire; I sent for her when I installed myself here."

"What a melancholy abode for a young girl!" said Louis. "That devil of a Gabriel was very clumsy. He did not remember that the trees, as they grew, would conceal and darken that building."

"But I assure you, Sire, that the apartments are very tolerable."

"That is impossible," said Louis XV.

"Will your Majesty deign to convince yourself?" said the dauphiness, anxious to do the honors of her palace.

"Very well. Will you come, Choiseul?"

"Sire, it is two o'clock. I have a parliamentary meeting at half-past two. I have only time to return to Versailles."

"Well, Duke, go ; and give those black-gowns a shake for me. Dauphiness, show me these little apartments, if you please ; I have a great liking for interiors."

"Come, Monsieur Mique," said the dauphiness to her architect, "you will have an opportunity of profiting by the opinion of his Majesty, who understands everything so well."

The king walked first, the dauphiness followed. They mounted the little flight of steps which led to the chapel, avoiding the entrance of the courtyard, which was at one side. The door of the chapel is on the left ; the staircase, narrow and unpretending, which leads to the corridor, on the right.

"Who lives here?" asked Louis XV.

"No one yet, Sire."

"There is a key in the door of the first suite of apartments."

"Ah, yes, true! Mademoiselle de Taverney enters it to-day."

"Here?" said the king, pointing to the door.

"Yes, Sire."

"And is she there at present? If so, let us not enter."

"Sire, she has just gone down ; I saw her walking under the veranda of the court-yard."

"Then show me her apartments as an example."

"As you please," replied the dauphiness ; and she introduced the king into the principal apartment, which was preceded by an ante-room and two closets.

Some articles of furniture which were already arranged, several books, a pianoforte, and, above all, an enormous bouquet of the most beautiful flowers, which Mademoiselle de Taverney had placed in a Chinese vase, attracted the king's attention. "Ah!" said he, "what beautiful flowers! And yet you wish to change the garden! Who

the devil supplies your people with flowers like these? Do they keep some for you?"

"It is in truth a beautiful bouquet."

"The gardener takes good care of Mademoiselle de Taverney. Who is your gardener here?"

"I do not know, Sire. Monsieur de Jussieu undertook to procure them for me."

The king gave a curious glance around the apartments, looked again at the exterior, peeped into the courtyard, and went away. His Majesty crossed the park and returned to the great Trianon, where his equipages were already in waiting for a hunt which was to take place after dinner, in carriages, from three till six o'clock.

The dauphin was still measuring the sun's altitude.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CONSPIRACY IS RENEWED.

While the king, in order to reassure Monsieur de Choiseul and not to lose any time himself, was walking thus in the Trianon till the chase should begin, Luciennes was the centre of a reunion of frightened conspirators, who had flown swiftly to Madame Dubarry, like birds who have smelt the sportsman's powder.

Jean and the Maréchal de Richelieu, after having looked at each other ill-humoredly for some time, were the first to take flight. The others were the usual herd of favorites, whom the certain disgrace of the Choiseuls had allured, whom the duke's return to favor had alarmed, and who, no longer finding the minister there to fawn upon, had returned mechanically to Luciennes, to see if the tree was yet strong enough for them to cling to as before.

Madame Dubarry was taking a siesta after the fatigues of her diplomacy and the deceptive triumph which had crowned it, when Richelieu's carriage rolled into the court with the noise and swiftness of a whirlwind.

"Mistress Dubarry is asleep," said Zamore, without moving.

Jean sent Zamore rolling on the carpet with a scientific kick, inflicted upon the most highly ornamented portion of his governor's uniform. Zamore screamed, and Chon hastened to inquire the cause. "You are beating that little fellow again, you brute!" said she.

"And I will exterminate you," continued Jean, with kindling eyes, "if you do not immediately awaken the Countess."

But there was no need to awaken the countess; at Zamore's cries, at the growling tones of Jean's voice, she had suspected some misfortune, and hastened into the room, wrapped in a dressing-gown.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, alarmed at seeing Jean stretched at full length upon the sofa to calm the agitation of his bile, and at finding that the marshal did not even kiss her hand.

"The matter, the matter?" said Jean. "*Parbleu!* what is always the matter, — the Choiseuls!"

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, thousand thunders! — firmer than ever."

"What are you saying?"

"The Comte Dubarry is right," continued Richelieu; "Monsieur the Duc de Choiseul is firmer than ever."

The countess drew the king's letter from her bosom. "And this?" said she, smiling.

"Have you read it aright, Countess?" asked the marshal.

"Why, I fancy I can read, Duke," replied Madame Dubarry.

"I do not doubt it, Madame. Will you allow me to read it also?"

"Oh, certainly! Read."

The duke took the paper, unfolded it slowly, and read: —

To-morrow I will thank Monsieur de Choiseul for his services. I promise it positively.

LOUIS.

"Is that clear?" said the countess.

"Perfectly clear," replied the marshal, with a grimace.

"Well, what?" said Jean.

"Well, it is to-morrow that we shall be victorious, and nothing is lost as yet."

"What! to-morrow? The king signed that for me yesterday; therefore 'to-morrow' is to-day."

"Pardon me, Madame!" said the duke; "as there is no date to the note, to-morrow will always be the day after you wish to see Monsieur de Choiseul dismissed. In the Rue de la Grange-Batalière, about one hundred paces from my house, there is a tavern, on the signboard of which is written in red characters, 'Credit given here to-morrow.' To-morrow, — that is, never."

"The king mocks us!" said Jean, furiously.

"Impossible," said the alarmed countess; "impossible! Such a trick would be unworthy —"

"Ah, Madame, his Majesty is so merry!" said Richelieu.

"He shall pay for this, Duke," said the countess, in a tone of anger.

"After all, Countess, we must not be angry with the king. We cannot accuse his Majesty of cheating or tricking us, for the king has performed what he promised."

"Oh!" said Jean, with a more than vulgar shrug of his shoulders.

"What did he promise?" cried the countess. "To thank Choiseul for his services?"

"And that is precisely what he has done, Madame. I heard his Majesty myself thank the Duke for his services. The word has two meanings: in diplomacy, each takes the one he prefers. You have chosen yours, the king has chosen his. Therefore there is no more question of to-morrow. It is indeed to-day, according to your opinion, that the king should have kept his promise; and he has done so. I who speak to you heard him thank Choiseul."

"Duke, this is no time for jesting, I think."

"Do you think I am jesting, Countess? Ask Comte Jean."

"No, *pardieu!*" said Jean, "it is no laughing matter. This morning Choiseul was embraced, flattered, feasted by the king; and even now he is walking arm in arm with him at Trianon."

"Arm in arm!" exclaimed Chon, who had slipped into the room, and who raised her snowy arms like a second Niobe in despair.

"Yes, I have been tricked," said the countess; "but we shall see. Chon, countermand my carriage for the chase. I will not go."

"Good!" said Jean.

"One moment," cried Richelieu. "No hurry, no pouting! Ah, forgive me, Countess, for daring to advise you! I entreat you to pardon me!"

"Go on, Duke; do not apologize. I think I am losing my senses. See how I am placed! I did not wish to meddle with politics, and the first time I touch upon them self-love launches me so far. You were saying —"

"That pouting now would not be prudent. The position is difficult, Countess. If the king is so decidedly in favor of these Choiseuls, if the dauphiness has so much influence over him, if he thus openly breaks a lance with you, you must —"

"Well, what?"

"You must be even more amiable than usual, Countess. I know it is impossible; but in a position like ours, the impossible becomes necessary. Attempt the impossible, then."

The countess reflected.

"For, in short," said the duke, "if the king should adopt German manners —"

"If he should become virtuous!" exclaimed Jean, horrified.

"Who knows, Countess?" said Richelieu; "novelty is so attractive."

"Oh, as for that," replied the Countess, with a nod of incredulity, "I do not believe it!"

"More extraordinary things have happened, Countess. You know the proverb of the devil turning hermit. So you must not pout."

"But I am suffocating with rage."

"*Parbleu!* Countess, I can believe you; but suffocate before us, breathe freely before the enemy. Do not let the king — that is to say, Monsieur de Choiseul — perceive your anger."

"And shall I go to the chase?"

"It would be most politic."

"And you, Duke?"

"Oh! I? If I should have to crawl on all-fours, I shall go."

"Come in my carriage, then!" cried the countess, to see what face her ally would put on.

"Oh, Countess!" replied the duke, smirking to hide his vexation, "it is such an honor —"

"That you refuse?"

"I? God forbid!"

"Take care; you will compromise yourself."

"I have no wish to compromise myself."

"He confesses it, — he dares to confess it!" cried Madame Dubarry.

"Countess, Countess! Monsieur de Choiseul will never forgive me."

"Are you already on such good terms with Monsieur de Choiseul?"

"Countess, Countess! I shall get into disgrace with the dauphiness."

"Would you rather we should each continue the war

separately, without sharing the spoil? There is still time. You are not compromised, and you may yet withdraw from the partnership."

"You misunderstand me, Countess," said the duke, kissing her hands. "Did I hesitate on the day of your presentation to send you a dress, a hairdresser, and a carriage? Well, I shall not hesitate any more to-day. Oh! I am bolder than you imagine, Countess."

"Then it is agreed. We will go to this hunt together, and that will serve me as a pretext for not seeing or speaking to any one."

"Not even to the king?"

"Oh! on the contrary, I will give him such sweet words that he will be in despair."

"Bravo! that is good tactics."

"But you, Jean, what are you doing there? Do endeavor to rise from those cushions; you are burying yourself alive, my good friend."

"You want to know what I am doing, do you? Well, I am thinking —"

"Of what?"

"I am thinking that all the ballad-writers of the town and of the department are setting us to all possible tunes; that the 'Nouvelles à la Main' is cutting us up like meat for pies; that the 'Gazetier Cuirassé' is piercing us for want of a cuirass; that the 'Journal des Observateurs' observes us even to the marrow of our bones; that, in short, to-morrow we shall be in so pitiable a state that even a Choiseul might pity us."

"And what is the result of your reflections?" asked the duke.

"Why, that I must hasten to Paris to buy a little lint and no inconsiderable quantity of ointment to put upon our wounds. Give me some money, my little sister."

"How much?" asked the countess.

"A trifle; two or three hundred louis."

"You see, Duke," said the countess, turning to Richelieu, "that I am already paying the expenses of the war."

"That is only the beginning of the campaign; and what you sow to-day, to-morrow you will reap."

The countess shrugged her shoulders slightly, rose, went to her chiffonniere, and opening it, took out a handful of bank-notes, which, without counting them, she handed to Jean, who, also without counting them, pocketed them with a deep sigh. Then rising, yawning, and stretching himself like a man overwhelmed with fatigue, he took a few steps across the room. "See," said he, pointing to the duke and the countess, "these people are going to amuse themselves at the chase, while I have to gallop to Paris. They will see gay cavaliers and lovely women, and I shall see nothing but the hideous faces of scribbling drudges. Certainly, I am the turnspit of the establishment."

"Mark me, Duke," said the countess, "he will never bestow a thought on us. Half my bank-notes will be squandered on some opera-girl, and the rest will disappear in a gambling-house. That is his errand to Paris, and yet he bemoans himself, the wretch! Leave my sight, Jean, you disgust me."

Jean emptied three plates of bonbons, stuffed the contents into his pockets, stole a Chinese figure with diamond eyes from the landing, and stalked off with a most majestic strut, pursued by the exclamations of the countess.

"What a delightful youth!" said Richelieu, in the tone of a parasite who praises a spoiled brat, while all the time he is inwardly devoting him to the infernal regions; "he is very dear to you, I suppose, Countess?"

"As you say, Duke, he has fixed all his happiness in me, and the speculation brings him three or four hundred thousand francs a year."

The clock struck.

"Half-past twelve, Countess," said the duke. "Luckily you are almost dressed. Show yourself a little to your courtiers, who might otherwise think there is an eclipse, and then let us to our carriage. You know how the chase is ordered?"

"His Majesty and I arranged it yesterday; they were to proceed to the forest of Marly, and take me up in passing."

"Oh! I am very sure the king has not changed the programme."

"In the mean time, Duke, let me hear your plan; it is your turn now."

"Madame, I wrote yesterday to my nephew, who, if I may believe my presentiments, is already on his way hither."

"Monsieur d'Aiguillon?"

"I should not be surprised if he crosses my letter on the road, and if he were here to-morrow or the day after at the latest."

"Then you count upon him?"

"Oh! Madame, he does not want for sense."

"No matter who it is, for we are at the last extremity. The king might perhaps submit, if he had not such a mortal antipathy to business."

"So that —"

"So that I fear he will never consent to give up Monsieur de Choiseul."

"Shall I speak frankly to you, Countess?"

"Certainly."

"Well! I think so too. The king will find a hundred

stratagems like that of yesterday; his Majesty has so much wit! And then, on your side, Countess, you will never risk losing his love by an unheard-of obstinacy."

"Perhaps. I must reflect upon that."

"You see, Countess, Monsieur de Choiseul is there for an eternity; nothing but a miracle can dislodge him."

"Yes, a miracle," repeated Jeanne.

"And unfortunately we are not now in the age of miracles."

"Oh!" said Madame Dubarry, "I know some one who works miracles yet."

"You know a man who works miracles?"

"By my faith, yes!"

"And you have not told me?"

"I thought of it only just now, Duke."

"Do you think he could assist us in this affair?"

"I think he can do everything."

"Oh, indeed! And what miracle has he worked? Tell me that, Countess, so that I may judge of his skill by the example."

"Duke," said Madame Dubarry, approaching Richelieu and involuntarily lowering her voice, "he is a man who, ten years ago, met me upon the Place Louis XV., and told me I should be queen of France."

"Indeed! that is miraculous; and could he tell me, think you, that I shall die prime minister?"

"Don't you think so?"

"Oh, I don't doubt it in the least! What is his name?"

"His name will tell you nothing."

"Where is he?"

"Ah! that I don't know."

"He did not give you his address?"

"No; he was to come to me for his recompense."

"What did you promise him?"

"Whatever he should ask."

"And he has not come?"

"No."

"Countess, that is even more miraculous than his prediction. We must certainly have this man."

"But how shall we proceed?"

"His name, Countess, his name!"

"He has two."

"Proceed according to order, — the first?"

"The Comte de Fenix."

"What! the man you pointed out to me on the day of your presentation?"

"Yes; the Prussian officer."

"Oh! I have no longer any faith in him. All the sorcerers I have ever known had names ending in *i* or *o*."

"That exactly suits, Duke; for his second name is Joseph Balsamo."

"But have you no way of finding him?"

"I shall task my brain, Duke. I think I know some one who knows him."

"Good! But make haste, Countess. It is now a quarter to one."

"I am ready. My carriage, there!"

Ten minutes afterward Madame Dubarry and Monsieur de Richelieu were seated side by side, and driving rapidly on their way to the hunting party.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SORCERER CHASE.

A long train of carriages filled the avenues of the forest of Marly, where the king was hunting. It was what was called the afternoon chase. In the latter part of his life Louis XV. neither shot at nor rode after the game; he was content with watching the progress of the chase.

Those of our readers who have read Plutarch will perhaps remember that cook of Mark Antony's who put a boar on the spit every hour, so that among the six or seven boars which were roasting, there might always be one ready whenever Mark Antony wished to dine. The reason of this was that Mark Antony, as governor of Asia Minor, was overwhelmed with business. He was the dispenser of justice, and as the Cilicians are great thieves (the fact is confirmed by Juvenal), Mark Antony had abundance of work on his hands. He had therefore always five or six roasts in various degrees of progress on the spit, waiting for the moment when his functions as judge would permit him to snatch a hasty morsel.

Louis XV. acted in a similar manner. For the afternoon chase there were three or four stags started at different hours; and accordingly as the king felt disposed he chose a nearer or more distant "view halloo." On this day his Majesty had signified his intention of hunting until four o'clock. A stag was therefore chosen, which had been started at noon, and which might consequently be expected to run until that hour.

Madame Dubarry intended to follow the king as faithfully as the king intended to follow the stag. But hunters propose, and fate disposes. A combination of circumstances frustrated this happy project of Madame Dubarry's, and the countess found in fate an adversary almost as capricious as herself.

While the countess, talking politics with Monsieur de Richelieu, drove rapidly after the king, who in his turn drove rapidly after the stag, and while the duke and she returned in part the bows which greeted them as they passed, they suddenly perceived, about fifty paces from the road, beneath a magnificent canopy of verdure, an open carriage turned upside down, while the two black horses which should have drawn it were peaceably munching, the one the bark of a beech-tree, the other the moss growing at his feet.

Madame Dubarry's horses, a magnificent pair presented to her by the king, had distanced — as we say nowadays — all the other carriages, and were the first to arrive in sight of the broken carriage.

"Ha, an accident!" said the countess, calmly.

"Faith, yes!" said the Duc de Richelieu, with equal coolness, for sensibility is little in fashion at court; "the carriage is broken to pieces."

"Is that a corpse upon the grass?" asked the countess. "Look, Duke."

"I think not; it moves."

"Is it a man or a woman?"

"I don't know; I cannot see well."

"Ha! it bows to us."

"Then it cannot be dead;" and Richelieu at all hazards took off his hat. "But, Countess," said he, "it seems to me —"

"And to me also —"

"That it is his Eminence Prince Louis."

"The Cardinal de Rohan in person!"

"What the devil is he doing there?" asked the duke.

"Let us go and see," replied the countess. "Champagne, drive on to the broken carriage."

The coachman immediately left the highroad and dashed in among the lofty trees.

"Faith, yes! it is Monseigneur le Cardinal," said Richelieu.

It was in truth his Eminence, who was lying stretched upon the grass, waiting until some of his friends should pass. Seeing Madame Dubarry approach, he rose. "A thousand compliments to the countess!" said he.

"What, Cardinal! is it you?"

"Myself, Madame."

"On foot?"

"No, sitting."

"Are you hurt?"

"Not in the least."

"And how in all the world do you happen to be in this condition?"

"Do not speak of it, Madame; that brute of a coachman, a rascal whom I imported from England, when I told him to cut across the wood in order to join the chase, turned so suddenly that he upset me and broke my best carriage."

"You must not complain, Cardinal," said the countess; "a French coachman would have broken your neck, or at least your ribs."

"Very possibly."

"Therefore be consoled."

"Oh! I am somewhat of a philosopher, Countess. But I shall have to wait, and that is fatal."

"How, Prince! to wait? A Rohan wait?"

"There is no alternative."

"Oh, no! I would rather alight and leave you my carriage."

"In truth, Madame, your kindness makes me ashamed."

"Come, jump in, Prince; jump in."

"No, thank you, Madame; I am waiting for Soubise, who is at the chase, and who cannot fail to pass in a few moments."

"But if he should have taken another road?"

"Oh! it is of no consequence."

"Monseigneur, I entreat you."

"No, thank you."

"But why not?"

"I am unwilling to incommode you."

"Cardinal, if you refuse to enter, I will order one of the footmen to carry my train, and I will roam through the woods like a dryad."

The cardinal smiled, and thinking that a longer resistance might be interpreted unfavorably by the countess, he consented to enter the carriage. The duke had already given up his place, and moved over to the seat in front. The cardinal entreated him to resume his former position, but the duke was inflexible. The countess's splendid horses soon made up for the time which had thus been lost.

"Pardon me, Monseigneur," said the countess, addressing the cardinal, "has your Eminence been reconciled to the chase?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because this is the first time I have seen you join in that amusement."

"By no means, Countess. I had come to Versailles to have the honor of paying my respects to his Majesty, when I was told he was at the chase. I had to speak to him on some important business, and therefore followed, hoping to overtake him; but thanks to this cursed coachman, I

shall not only lose his Majesty's ear, but also my assignation in town."

"You see, Madame," said the duke, laughing, "Monseigneur makes a free confession, — he has an assignation!"

"Which, I repeat, I shall fail to meet," replied the cardinal.

"Does a Rohan, a prince, a cardinal, ever fail in anything?" said the countess.

"It looks so now," said the prince, "unless a miracle comes to my assistance."

The duke and the countess looked at each other; this word recalled their recent conversation.

"Faith! Prince," said the countess, "speaking of miracles, I will confess frankly that I am very happy to meet a dignitary of the Church, that I may ask him if he believes in them."

"In what, Madame?"

"*Parbleu!* in miracles," said the duke.

"The Scriptures give them as an article of faith, Madame," said the cardinal, trying to look devout.

"Oh! I am not speaking of ancient miracles," replied the countess.

"And of what miracles do you speak, Madame?"

"Of modern miracles."

"Those indeed, I confess, are rather more rare," said the cardinal; "but still —"

"But still, what?"

"Faith! I have seen things which, if they were not miraculous, were at least very incredible."

"You have seen such things, Prince?"

"On my honor."

"But you know, Madame," said Richelieu, laughing, "that his Eminence is said to be in communication with spirits, which, perhaps, is not very orthodox."

"No, but which must be very convenient," said the countess. "And what have you seen, Prince?"

"I have sworn not to reveal it."

"Oh! that begins to look serious."

"It is a fact, Madame."

"But if you have promised to observe secrecy respecting the sorcery, perhaps you have not done so as regards the sorcerer?"

"No."

"Well, then, Prince, I must tell you that the duke and myself came out to-day with the intention of seeking some magician."

"Really?"

"Upon my honor."

"Take mine."

"I desire nothing better."

"He is at your disposal, Countess."

"And at mine also, Prince?"

"And at yours also, Duke."

"What is his name?"

"The Comte de Fenix."

The countess and the duke looked at each other and turned pale. "That is strange," said they together.

"Do you know him?" asked the prince.

"No. And you think him a sorcerer?"

"I am positive of it."

"You have spoken to him, then?"

"Of course."

"And you found him —"

"Perfect."

"On what occasion, may I ask?"

"Why —" the cardinal hesitated, — "on the occasion of his foretelling my fortune."

"Correctly?"

"He told me things of the other world."

"Has he no other name than the Comte de Fenix?"

"Yes; I have heard him called — "

"Speak Monseigneur," said the countess, impatiently.

"Joseph Balsamo, Madame."

The countess clasped her hands and looked at Richelieu. Richelieu rubbed the end of his nose and looked at the countess.

"Is the devil very black?" asked Madame Dubarry, suddenly.

"The devil, Countess? I have not seen him."

"What are you thinking of, Countess?" cried Richelieu. "*Pardieu!* that would be respectable company for a cardinal!"

"And did he tell you your fortune without showing you the devil?" asked the countess.

"Oh! certainly," said the cardinal; "they show the devil only to people of no consideration. We can dispense with him."

"But say what you will, Prince," continued Madame Dubarry, "there must be a little deviltry at the bottom of it."

"Faith! I think so."

"Blue fire, spectres, infernal caldrons which smell horribly while they boil, eh?"

"Oh, no! my sorcerer is most polite and well-bred; he is a very gallant man, and receives his visitors in good style."

"Will you not have your horoscope drawn by this man, Countess?" said Richelieu.

"I long to do so, I confess."

"Do so, then, Madame."

"But where does all this take place?" asked Madame Dubarry, hoping that the cardinal would give her the wished-for address.

"In a very handsome room, fashionably furnished."

The countess could scarcely conceal her impatience. "Very well," said she; "but the house?"

"A very fine house, though in a singular style of architecture."

The countess stamped with rage at being so ill understood. Richelieu came to her assistance. "But do you not see, Monseigneur," said he, "that madame is eager to know where your sorcerer lives?"

"Where he lives, you say? Oh! well," replied the cardinal, "eh! faith — wait a moment — no — yes — no. It is in the Marais, near the corner of the boulevard, Rue St. François, St. Anastasie — no. However, it is the name of some saint."

"But what saint? You must surely know them all."

"No, faith! I know very little about them," said the cardinal. "But stay — my fool of a footman must remember."

"Oh! very fortunately he got up behind," said the duke. "Stop, Champagne, stop!" and the duke pulled the cord which was attached to the coachman's little finger, who suddenly reined in the foaming horses, throwing them on their sinewy haunches.

"Olive," said the cardinal, "are you there, you scoundrel?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Where did I stop one evening in the Marais, — a long time back?"

The lackey had overheard the whole conversation, but took care not to appear as if he had done so. "In the Marais?" said he, seeming to search his memory.

"Yes, near the boulevards."

"What day, Monseigneur?"

"One day when I was returning from St. Denis."

"From St. Denis?" said Olive, to give himself importance, and to make his hesitation seem more natural.

"Eh! yes, from St. Denis; the carriage, I think, waited for me in the boulevards."

"Oh, yes, Monseigneur," said Olive, "I remember now. A man came and threw a very heavy parcel into the carriage; I remember it perfectly."

"Very possibly," replied the cardinal; "but who asked you about that, you scoundrel?"

"What does your Eminence wish, then?"

"To know the name of the street."

"Rue St. Claude, Monseigneur."

"Claude, that is it!" cried the cardinal. "I would have laid any wager it was the name of a saint."

"Rue St. Claude!" repeated the countess, darting such an expressive glance at Richelieu that the marshal, fearing to let any one into his secrets, especially when they related to a conspiracy, interrupted Madame Dubarry by these words: "Ha! Countess, — the king!"

"Where?"

"Yonder."

"The king! the king!" exclaimed the countess. "To the left, Champagne, to the left, that his Majesty may not see us."

"And why, Countess?" asked the astonished cardinal. "I thought that, on the contrary, you were taking me to his Majesty."

"Oh, true! you wish to see the king, do you not?"

"I came for that alone, Madame."

"Very well! you shall be taken to the king —"

"But you?"

"Oh! we shall remain here."

"But, Countess —"

"No apologies, Prince, I entreat; every one to his own

business. The king is yonder, under those chestnut-trees; you have business with the king, — very well, the affair is easily arranged. Champagne!"

Champagne pulled up.

"Champagne, let us alight here, and you may take his Eminence to the king."

"What! alone, Countess?" exclaimed the cardinal.

"You wish to have an audience of his Majesty, Cardinal?"

"It is true."

"Well! you shall have him entirely to yourself."

"Ah! this kindness overwhelms me;" and the prelate gallantly kissed Madame Dubarry's hand. "But where will you remain yourself, Madame?" he inquired.

"Here, under these trees."

"The king will be looking for you."

"So much the better."

"He will be uneasy at not seeing you."

"And that will torment him, — just what I wish."

"Countess, you are adorable."

"That is precisely what the king says when I have tormented him. Champagne, when you have taken his Eminence to the king, you will return at full gallop."

"Yes, Madame."

"Adieu, Duke," said the cardinal."

"Au revoir, Monseigneur," replied the duke.

And the valet having let down the step, the duke alighted and handed out the countess, who leaped to the ground as lightly as a nun escaping from a convent, while the carriage rapidly bore his Eminence to the hillock from which his most Christian Majesty was seeking, with his short-sighted eyes, the naughty countess whom every one had seen but himself.

Madame Dubarry lost no time. She took the duke's

arm, and drawing him into the thicket, — "Do you know," said she, "it must have been Providence who sent that dear cardinal to us."

"To get rid of him for a moment, — I understand that," replied the Duke.

"No, to put us on the trace of our man!"

"Then we are going to his house?"

"I think so; but —"

"What, Countess?"

"I am afraid, I confess it."

"Of whom?"

"Of the sorcerer. Oh, I am very superstitious!"

"The devil!"

"And you, do you believe in sorcerers?"

"I can't say I do not, Countess."

"My story of the prediction —"

"Is a startling fact. And I myself," said the old marshal, scratching his ear, "once met a certain sorcerer —"

"Bah!"

"— Who rendered me a very important service."

"What service, Duke?"

"He resuscitated me."

"He resuscitated you?"

"Certainly; I was dead, — no less."

"Oh! tell me the whole affair, Duke."

"Let us conceal ourselves, then."

"Duke, you are a dreadful coward."

"Oh, no! I am only prudent."

"Are we well placed here?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, the story, the story!"

"Well, I was at Vienna. It was when I was ambassador there. One evening, while I was standing under a lamp, I received a sword-thrust through my body. It

was a husband's sword, — devilishly unwholesome. I fell. Some one picked me up ; I was dead."

"What! you were dead?"

"Yes, or nearly so. A sorcerer passes, who asks who is the man whom they are carrying. He is told it is I ; he stops the litter, pours three drops of some unknown liquid into the wound, three more between my lips, and the bleeding stops, respiration returns, my eyes open, and I am cured."

"It is a miracle from heaven, Duke."

"That is just what frightens me ; for, on the contrary, I believe it is a miracle of the devil."

"True, Marshal ; God would not have saved a dissipated rake like you. Honor to whom honor is due. And does your sorcerer still live?"

"I doubt it, unless he has found the elixir of life."

"Like you, Marshal?"

"Do you believe these stories, then?"

"I believe everything. He was old?"

"Methuselah in person."

"And his name?"

"Ah! a magnificent Greek name, — Althotas."

"What a terrible name, Marshal!"

"Is it not, Madame?"

"Duke, there is the carriage returning. Are we decided? Shall we go to Paris and visit the Rue St. Claude?"

"If you like. But the king is waiting for you."

"That would determine me, Duke, if I had not already determined. He has tormented me. Now, France, it is your turn to suffer."

"But he will think you are lost, — carried off."

"And so much the more, that I have been seen with you, Marshal."

"Stay, Countess! I will be frank with you; I am afraid."

"Of what?"

"I am afraid that you will tell all this to some one, and that I shall be laughed at."

"Then we shall both be laughed at together, since I go with you."

"That decides me, Countess. However, if you betray me, I shall say —"

"What will you say?"

"I shall say that you came with me *tête-à-tête*."

"No one will believe you, Duke."

"Ah, Countess, if the king were not there!"

"Champagne, Champagne! Here, behind this thicket, that we may not be seen. Germain, the door. That will do. Now to Paris, Rue St. Claude, in the Marais, and let the pavement smoke for it."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE COURIER.

It was six o'clock in the evening. In that chamber in the Rue St. Claude into which we have already introduced our readers, Balsamo was seated beside Lorenza, now awake, and was endeavoring by persuasion to soften that rebellious spirit. But the young woman looked askance at him, as Dido looked at Æneas when he was about to leave her, she spoke only to reproach him, and moved her hand only to repulse him. She complained that she was a prisoner, a slave; that she could no longer breathe the fresh air, nor see the sun. She envied the fate of the poorest creatures, of the birds, of the flowers. She called Balsamo her tyrant. Then, passing from reproaches to rage, she tore into shreds the rich stuffs which her husband had given her to cheer, by this semblance of gayety, the solitude he imposed on her.

Balsamo, on the other hand, spoke gently to her, and looked at her lovingly. It was evident that this weak, irritable creature filled a large place in his heart, if not in his life.

"Lorenza," said he to her, "my beloved, why do you display this spirit of resistance and hostility? Why will you not live with me, who love you inexpressibly, as a gentle and devoted companion? You would then have nothing to wish for; you would be free to bloom in the sun like the flowers of which you spoke just now, — to stretch your wings like the birds whose fate you envy.

We would go everywhere together. You would not only see the sun which delights you so much, but the factitious sun of splendor and fashion, — those assemblies to which the women of this country resort. You would be happy according to your tastes, while rendering me happy in mine. Why will you refuse this happiness, Lorenza, — you who, with your beauty and riches, would make so many women envious?"

"Because I abhor you!" said the proud young woman.

Balsamo cast on Lorenza a glance expressive at once of anger and pity. "Live, then, as you condemn yourself to live," said he; "and since you are so proud, do not complain."

"I should not complain, if you would leave me alone; I should not complain, if you did not force me to speak to you. Do not come into my presence, or when you do enter my prison, do not speak to me, and I will do as the poor birds from the South do when they are imprisoned in cages, — they die, but they do not sing."

Balsamo made an effort to control himself.

"Come, Lorenza," said he, "a little more gentleness and resignation. Look into my heart, which loves you above all things. Do you wish for books?"

"No."

"Why not? Books would amuse you."

"I wish to weary myself to death."

Balsamo smiled, or rather endeavored to smile. "You are mad," said he; "you know very well that you cannot die while I am here to take care of you and to cure you when you fall ill."

"Oh!" cried Lorenza, "you will not cure me when you find me strangled with this scarf against the bars of my window."

Balsamo shuddered.

"Or when," continued she, furiously, "I have opened this knife and stabbed myself to the heart."

Balsamo, pale as death, and bathed in cold perspiration, gazed at Lorenza, and with a threatening voice, "No, Lorenza," said he, "you are right; I shall not cure you then, I shall bring you back to life."

Lorenza gave a cry of terror. She knew no bounds to Balsamo's power, and believed his threat. Balsamo was saved. While she was plunged in this new abyss of suffering, which she had not foreseen, and while her vacillating reason saw itself encircled by a never-ceasing round of torture, the sound of the signal-bell pulled by Fritz reached Balsamo's ear. It struck three times quickly, and at regular intervals.

"A courier," said he.

Then after a pause another ring was heard.

"And in haste," he said.

"Ah!" said Lorenza, "you are about to leave me, then!"

He took the young woman's cold hand in his. "Once more and for the last time, Lorenza," said he, "let us live on good terms with each other like brother and sister. Since destiny unites us to each other, let us make destiny a friend, and not an executioner."

Lorenza did not reply. Her eye, motionless and sad, seemed to seek some thought which she could not find, perhaps because she had sought it too long and too earnestly, — like those who, after having lived in darkness, gaze too ardently on the sun, and are blinded by excess of light. Balsamo took her hand and kissed it without her giving any sign of life. Then he advanced toward the chimney. Immediately Lorenza started from her torpor, and eagerly fixed her gaze upon him.

"Oh!" said he, "you wish to know how I leave this,

in order to leave it one day after me and flee from me as you threatened. And therefore you awake; therefore you look at me."

Then, passing his hand over his forehead, as if he imposed a painful constraint on himself, he stretched his hand toward Lorenza, and said in a commanding voice, looking at her as if he were darting a javelin against her head and breast: "Sleep!"

The word was scarcely uttered when Lorenza bent like a flower upon its stem; her head, for a single moment unsteady, drooped and rested against the cushion of the sofa; her hands, of an opaque and waxen whiteness, glided down her sides, rustling her silken dress. Balsamo, seeing her so beautiful, approached her and pressed his lips upon her lovely forehead.

Then Lorenza's features brightened, as if a breath from the God of Love himself had swept away the cloud which rested on her brow. Her lips opened tremulously, her eyes swam in voluptuous tears, and she sighed as the angels must have sighed when in earth's youthful prime they stooped to love the children of men. Balsamo looked upon her for a moment, as if unable to withdraw his gaze; then as the bell sounded anew, he turned toward the chimney, touched a spring, and disappeared behind the flowers.

Fritz was waiting for him in the salon with a men dressed in the closely fitting jacket of a courier, and wearing thick boots armed with long spurs. The commonplace and inexpressive features of this man showed him to be one of the people; but his eye had in it a spark of sacred fire which seemed to have been breathed into him by some superior intelligence. His left hand grasped a short and knotty whip, while with his right hand he made some signs to Balsamo, which the latter instantly recog-

nized, and to which, without speaking, he replied by touching his forehead with his forefinger.

The postilion's hand moved upward to his breast, where it traced another sign, which an indifferent observer would not have remarked, so closely did it resemble the movement made in fastening a button. To this sign the Master replied by showing a ring which he wore upon his finger. Before this powerful signet the messenger bent his knee.

"Whence come you?" asked Balsamo.

"From Rouen, Master."

"What is your profession?"

"I am a courier in the service of the Duchesse de Grammont."

"Who placed you there?"

"The will of the Great Copt."

"What orders did you receive when you entered the service?"

"To have no secret from the Master."

"Whither are you going?"

"To Versailles."

"What are you carrying?"

"A letter."

"For whom?"

"For the minister."

"Give it me."

The courier took a letter from a leathern bag fastened upon his shoulders behind, and gave it to Balsamo.

"Shall I wait?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I wait."

"Fritz!"

The German appeared.

"Keep Sebastian concealed in the office."

"He knows my name," murmured the courier, with superstitious fear.

"He knows everything," said Fritz, drawing him away.

When Balsamo was once more alone, he looked at the unbroken, deeply cut seal of the letter, which the imploring glance of the messenger had entreated him to respect as much as possible. Then, slowly and pensively, he once more mounted toward Lorenza's apartment, and opened the door of communication.

Lorenza was still sleeping, but seemingly tired and enervated by inaction. He took her hand, which she closed convulsively, and then he placed the letter, sealed as it was, upon her heart.

"Do you see?" he asked.

"Yes I see," replied Lorenza.

"What is the object which I hold in my hand?"

"A letter."

"Can you read it?"

"I can."

"Do so, then."

With closed eyes and palpitating bosom, Lorenza repeated, word for word, the following lines, which Balsamo wrote down as she spoke:—

DEAR BROTHER, — As I had foreseen, my exile will be at least of some service to us. I have this morning seen the president of Rouen; he is for us, but timid. I urged him in your name; he has at last decided, and the remonstrance of his division will be in Versailles within a week. I am about setting off for Rennes to rouse Karadeuc and La Chalotais, who are sleeping on their post. Our agent from Caudebec was in Rouen. I have seen him. England will not stop midway; she is preparing a sharp notification for the cabinet of Versailles. X — asked me if he should produce it, and I authorized him to do so. You will receive the last pamphlets of Morande and Delille against the Dubarry. They are petards

which might blow up a town. A sad report reached me, that there was disgrace in the air; but as you have not written to me, I laugh at it. Do not leave me in doubt, however, and reply courier for courier. Your message will find me at Caen, where I have some of our gentlemen to gain over. Adieu; I salute you.

DUCHESSE DE GRAMMONT.

After reading thus far Lorenza stopped.

"You see nothing more?" asked Balsamo.

"I see nothing."

"No postscript?"

"No."

Balsamo, whose brow had gradually smoothed as Lorenza read the letter, now took it from her. "A curious document," said he, "and one for which they would pay me well. Oh! how can any one write such things?" he continued. "Yes, it is always women who are the ruin of great men. This Choiseul could not have been overthrown by an army of enemies, or by a world of intrigues; and now the breath of a woman crushes while it caresses him. Yes, we all perish by the treachery or the weakness of women. If we have a heart, and in that heart a sensitive chord, we are lost."

And as he spoke Balsamo gazed with inexpressible tenderness at Lorenza, who shuddered under his glance. "Is it true, what I think?" said he.

"No, no, it is not true!" she replied, eagerly; "you see plainly that I love you too dearly to do you any hurt, like those women you spoke of, without sense and without heart."

Balsamo allowed himself to be embraced by the arms of his enchantress. Suddenly a double ring of Fritz's bell sounded twice.

"Two visitors," said Balsamo.

A single violent ring completed the telegraphic message. Balsamo, disengaging himself from Lorenza's arms, hastened from the apartment, leaving the young girl still asleep. On his way he met the courier, who was waiting for orders. "Here is your letter," said he.

"What must I do with it?"

"Deliver it as addressed."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

The courier looked at the envelope and at the seal, and seeing them intact, as when he had brought them, expressed his satisfaction, and disappeared in the darkness.

"What a pity not to keep such an autograph," said Balsamo, "and, above all, what a pity not to be able to forward it by a safe hand to the king."

Fritz now appeared.

"Who is there?" asked Balsamo.

"A man and a woman."

"Have they been here before?"

"No."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"Is the woman young?"

"Young and handsome."

"The man?"

"From sixty to sixty-five years of age."

"Where are they?"

"In the salon."

Balsamo entered.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE EVOCATION.

THE countess had completely concealed her face in a hood. As she had found time in passing to call at the family residence, she had assumed the dress of a citizen's wife. She had come in a carriage with the marshal, who, even more timid than she, had donned a gray dress like that of a superior servant in a respectable household.

"Do you recognize me, Count?" said Madame Dubarry.

"Perfectly, Madame la Comtesse."

Richelieu had remained in the background.

"Deign to be seated, Madame, and you also, Monsieur."

"This is my intendant," said the countess.

"You err, Madame," said Balsamo, bowing; "the gentleman is the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu, whom I recognize easily, and who would be very ungrateful if he did not recognize me."

"How so?" asked the duke, quite confounded.

"Monsieur le Duc, a man owes a little gratitude, I think, to those who have saved his life."

"Ah, ah, Duke!" said the countess, laughing; "do you hear, Duke?"

"What! you saved my life, Count?" asked Richelieu, astonished.

"Yes, Monseigneur, — at Vienna, in the year 1725, when you were ambassador there."

"In 1725! But you were not born, then, my dear Monsieur."

Balsamo smiled. "It seems to me that I was, Monsieur le Duc," said he, "since I met you dying, or rather dead, upon a litter. You had just received a sword-thrust right through your body, and I poured three drops of my elixir upon the wound. There, hold! in the place where you are ruffling your Alençon lace, — rather fine for an intendant."

"But," interrupted the marshal, "you are scarcely thirty-five years of âge, Count."

"There, Duke," cried the countess, laughing heartily, "there you are before the sorcerer! Do you believe now?"

"I am stupefied, Countess! But at that period," continued the duke, addressing Balsamo, "you called yourself —"

"Oh, Duke, we sorcerers change our names in each generation! Now, in 1725 names ending in *us*, *os*, or *as*, were the fashion; and I should not be surprised if at that time I had been seized with the whim of bartering my name for one taken from the Latin or Greek. This being disposed of, I am at your service, Madame la Comtesse, — at your service, Monsieur le Duc."

"Count, the Marshal and I have come to consult you."

"You do me too much honor, Madame, especially if this idea arose naturally in your minds."

"Oh, in the most natural manner in the world, Count! Your prediction still haunts my thoughts; only I fear it will not be realized."

"Never doubt what science says, Madame."

"Oh, oh!" said Richelieu; "but our crown is a hazardous game, Count. It is not here an affair of a wound which three drops of elixir can cure."

"No; but of a minister whom three words can ruin," replied Balsamo. "Well, have I rightly divined? Tell me."

"Perfectly," said the countess, trembling. "Really, Duke, what do you say to all this?"

"Oh, do not let such a trifle astonish you, Madame!" said Balsamo; "whoever sees Madame Dubarry and Richelieu uneasy, may divine the cause without magic."

"And so," added the marshal, "I shall adore you if you will point out to us the remedy."

"The remedy for your complaint?"

"Yes; we are ill of the Choiseul."

"And you wish to be cured?"

"Yes, great magician."

"Count, you will not leave us in our embarrassment!" said the countess; "your honor is engaged."

"My best services are at your command, Madame; but I first wish to know if the duke had not some definite plan formed when he came here?"

"I confess it, Monsieur le Comte! Really, it is delightful to have a sorcerer who may be addressed as 'Monsieur le Comte;' we do not need to change our modes of speech."

Balsamo smiled. "Come," said he, "let us be frank."

"'Pon honor, I wish for nothing else," replied the duke.

"You had some plan to submit to me?"

"That is true."

"Ah, deceiver!" said the countess, "you never spoke of that to me."

"I could speak of it only to the count, and that in the most secret corner of his ear," replied the marshal.

"Why, Duke?"

"Because you would have blushed, Countess, to the whites of your eyes."

"Oh, tell it now, Marshal, to satisfy my curiosity! I am rouged, so you will see nothing."

"Well," said Richelieu, "this is what I thought. Take

care, Countess, I am going to take a most extravagant flight!"

"Fly as high as you will, Duke, I am prepared."

"Oh! but I fear you will beat me when you hear what I am about to say."

"You are not accustomed to be beaten, Monsieur le Duc," said Balsamo to the old marshal, who was delighted with the compliment.

"Well," he replied, "here it is. With all deference to Madame, to his Majesty, how am I to express it?"

"How tiresome he is!" cried the countess.

"You will have it, then?"

"Yes, yes; a hundred times, yes!"

"Then I will venture. It is a sad thing to say, Count, but his Majesty is no longer amusable! The word is not mine, Countess; it is Madame de Maintenon's."

"There is nothing in that which hurts me, Duke," said Madame Dubarry.

"So much the better; then I shall feel at my ease. Well, the Count, who discovers such precious elixirs, must — "

"Find one which shall restore to the king the faculty of being amused."

"Exactly."

"Oh, Duke, that is mere child's play, — the *a b c* of our craft! Any charlatan can furnish you with a philter — "

"Whose virtue," continued the duke, "would be put to the account of Madame's merit?"

"Duke!" exclaimed the countess.

"Oh! I knew you would be angry, but you would have it."

"Monsieur le Duc," replied Balsamo, "you were right. Look! the countess blushes. But just now we agreed that it is not now a question of wounds or of love. A

philter will not rid France of Monsieur de Choiseul. In fact, if the king loved Madame ten times more than he does, — and that is impossible, — Monsieur de Choiseul would still retain the same influence over his mind which Madame exerts over his heart."

"Very true," said the marshal; "but it was our only resource."

"You think so?"

"Certainly; find another."

"Oh! that would be easy."

"Easy! do you hear, Countess? These sorcerers stop at nothing."

"Why should I stop, when the only thing necessary is to prove to the king that Monsieur de Choiseul betrays him, — that is to say, regarding the matter from the king's point of view, you understand; for Monsieur de Choiseul has no thought of treachery in acting as he does."

"And what does he do?"

"You know as well as I do, Countess, — he supports the parliament in their revolt against the royal authority."

"Certainly; but we must know by what means."

"By the means of agents who encourage them by promising them impunity."

"Who are the agents? We must know that."

"Do you believe, for example, that Madame de Grammont is gone for any other purpose than to sustain the ardent and warm the timid?"

"Certainly; she left for no other reason," replied the countess.

"Yes; but the king thinks it a simple exile."

"It is true. How can you prove to him that in this departure there is anything more than he supposes?"

"By accusing Madame de Grammont."

"Ah! if there were nothing necessary but to accuse her, Count!" said the marshal.

"But, unfortunately, the accusation must be proved," added the countess.

"And if this accusation were proved, incontrovertibly proved, do you think Monsieur de Choiseul would still be minister?"

"Certainly not," said the countess.

"Nothing is necessary, then, but to discover the treachery of Monsieur de Choiseul," pursued Balsamo, with assurance, "and to display it clearly, precisely, and palpably before the eyes of his Majesty."

The marshal threw himself back upon an armchair and burst into peals of laughter. "Charming!" he exclaimed; "he stops at nothing! Discover Monsieur de Choiseul in the act of committing treason, — that is all; nothing more!"

Balsamo remained calm and unmoved, waiting until the marshal's mirth had subsided. Then he said: "Come, let us speak seriously; let us recapitulate."

"So be it."

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul suspected of encouraging the revolt of the parliament?"

"Granted; but the proof?"

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul supposed," continued Balsamo, "to be attempting to bring about a war with England, in order that he may become indispensable?"

"It is so believed; but the proof?"

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul the declared enemy of the countess, and does he not seek, by all possible means, to drag her from the throne I promised her?"

"Ah! all this is very true," said the countess; "but once more I repeat, it must be proved. Oh that I could prove it!"

"What is necessary for that? A mere trifle."

The marshal gave a low whistle. "Yes, a mere trifle!" said he, sarcastically.

"A confidential letter, for example," said Balsamo.

"Yes; that is all, — a mere nothing."

"A letter from Madame de Grammont would do, would it not, Marshal?" continued the count.

"Sorcerer, my good sorcerer, find me such a letter!" cried Madame Dubarry. "I have been trying for five years; I have spent in that quest a hundred thousand francs a year, and have never succeeded."

"Because you never applied to me, Madame," said Balsamo.

"How so?" said the countess.

"Without doubt, if you had applied to me, I could have assisted you."

"Could you? Count, is it yet too late?"

The count smiled. "It is never too late," said he.

"Oh, my dear Count!" said Madame Dubarry, clasping her hands.

"You want a letter, then?"

"Yes."

"From Madame de Grammont?"

"If it is possible."

"Which shall compromise Monsieur de Choiseul on the three points which I have mentioned?"

"I would give — one of my eyes to have it."

"Oh, Countess, that would be too dear! — especially as I will give it to you for nothing;" and Balsamo drew a folded paper from his pocket.

"What is that?" asked the countess, devouring the paper with her eyes.

"Yes, what is that?" repeated the duke.

"The letter you wished for;" and the count, amid

the most profound silence, read the letter, with which our readers are already acquainted, to his two astonished auditors. As he read, the countess opened her eyes to their utmost width, and began to lose countenance.

"It is a forgery," said Richelieu, when the letter had been read. "The devil! we must take care."

"Monsieur, it is the simple and literal copy of a letter from the Duchesse de Grammont, which a courier, despatched this morning from Rouen, is now carrying to the Duc de Choiseul at Versailles."

"Oh, my God!" cried the marshal, "do you speak truly, Monsieur Balsamo?"

"I always speak the truth, Marshal."

"The duchess has written such a letter?"

"Yes, Marshal."

"She has been so imprudent?"

"It is incredible, I confess; but so it is."

The old duke looked at the countess, who had no longer the power to utter a word.

"Well," said she at last, "I am like the duke, I can scarcely believe — pardon me, Count — that Madame de Grammont, a woman of sense, should compromise her own position and that of her brother by a letter so strongly expressed. Besides, to know of such a letter, one must have read it —"

"And then," said the marshal, quickly, "if the Count had read this letter, he would have kept it; it is a precious treasure."

Balsamo gently shook his head. "Oh!" said he, "such a plan might suit those who have to break open letters in order to ascertain their contents; but not those who, like myself, can read through the envelopes. Fie upon you! Besides, what interest could I have in ruining Monsieur de Choiseul and Madame de Grammont? You come to

consult me, — as friends, I presume, — and I answer you in the same manner. You wish me to render you a service; I do so. You do not mean, I suppose, to ask me my charge for the interview, as you would the fortune-tellers of the Quai de la Ferraille?"

"Oh, Count!" said Madame Dubarry.

"Well, I give you this advice, and you seem not to comprehend it. You express a wish to overthrow Monsieur de Choiseul, and you seek the means. I tell you one; you approve it. I put it into your hands, and — you do not believe it."

"Because — because — Count — I —"

"The letter exists, I tell you, for I have the copy."

"But who told you of its existence, Count?" cried Richelieu.

"Ah! that is a great word, — who told me? You wish to know in one moment as much as I know, — I the worker, the sage, the adept who has lived three thousand seven hundred years."

"Oh, oh!" said Richelieu, discouraged, "you are going to spoil the good opinion I had formed of you, Count."

"I do not ask you to believe me, Monsieur le Duc; it is not I who brought you hither from the chase."

"Duke, he is right," said the countess. "Monsieur de Balsamo, pray do not be impatient."

"He who has time never gets impatient, Madame."

"Will you be so good as to add another favor to those you have already conferred upon me, and tell me how these secrets are revealed to you."

"I will not hesitate, Madame," said Balsamo, as slowly as if he were searching for each word separately; "the revelation is made to me by a voice."

"By a voice!" cried the duke and the countess simultaneously, — "a voice which tells you everything?"

"Everything I wish to know, yes."

"Was it a voice that told you what Madame de Grammont had written to her brother?"

"I repeat, Madame, it is a voice which tells me."

"Miraculous!"

"But you do not believe it."

"Well, no, Count," said the duke; "how do you imagine I can believe such things?"

"Would you believe it if I told you what the courier who carries the letter to Monsieur de Choiseul is doing at this moment?"

"Certainly!" exclaimed the countess.

"I would believe it," cried the duke, "if I heard the voice; but messieurs the necromancers and magicians have the privilege of seeing and hearing the supernatural without witnesses."

Balsamo looked at Richelieu with a singular expression, which made a shudder pass through the veins of the countess, and even sent a slight chill to the heart of the sceptical egotist called the Duc de Richelieu. "Yes," said he, after a long silence, "alone, I see and hear supernatural objects and sounds; but when I am in the society of people of rank, — of your talent, Duke, and of your beauty, Countess, — I display my treasures and share them. Would it please you very much to hear the mysterious voice which speaks to me?"

"Yes," said the duke, clenching his hands tightly, that he might not tremble.

"Yes," stammered the countess, trembling.

"Well, Duke, — well, Countess, you shall hear it. What language shall it speak?"

"French, if you please," said the countess. "I know no other; any other would frighten me."

"And you, Duke?"

"As Madame says, French; for then I shall be able to repeat what the devil says, and to discover if he is well educated and speaks correctly the language of my friend Monsieur de Voltaire."

Balsamo, his head drooping on his breast, crossed over to the door leading into the little salon, which opened, as we are aware, on the stairs.

"Permit me," said he, "to conceal you here, in order not to expose you to the risk of discovery."

The countess turned pale, approached the duke, and took his arm. Balsamo, almost touching the door leading to the stairs, made a step toward that part of the house in which Lorenza was, and pronounced in a low voice the following words, in the Arabic tongue, which we translate: "My friend, do you hear me? If so, pull the cord of the bell twice."

Balsamo waited to see the effect of these words, and looked at the duke and countess, who opened their eyes and ears, — with the more eager curiosity that they could not understand what the count said. The bell sounded twice distinctly. The countess started from her sofa, and the duke wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Since you hear me," continued Balsamo in the same language, "press the marble button which forms the right eye of the sculptured figure on the mantelpiece, the back will open; pass out by this opening, cross my room, descend the stairs, and enter the apartment adjoining the one in which I am."

A moment later a faint noise, like a scarcely audible breath, told Balsamo that his order had been understood and obeyed.

"What language is that," asked the duke, affecting assurance, — "the cabalistic language?"

"Yes, Duke; the language used for the summoning of spirits."

"You said we should understand it."

"What the voice said, but not what I say."

"Has the devil come yet?"

"Who spoke of the devil, Duke?"

"Whom do you evoke but the devil?"

"Every superior spirit, every supernatural being, can be evoked."

"And the superior spirit, the supernatural being —"

Balsamo extended his hand toward the tapestry which concealed the door of the next apartment.

"Is in direct communication with me, Monseigneur."

"I am afraid," said the countess; "are you, Duke?"

"Faith, Countess! I confess to you that I would almost as soon be at Mahon or at Philipsburg."

"Madame la Comtesse, and you, Monsieur le Duc, listen, since you wish to hear," said Balsamo, severely; and he turned toward the door.

CHAPTER XL.

THE VOICE.

THERE was a moment of solemn silence. Then Balsamo asked in French, "Are you there?"

"I am," replied a clear, silvery voice, which, penetrating through the hangings and the portières, seemed to those present rather like a metallic sound than a human voice.

"*Peste!* it is becoming interesting," said the duke; "and all without torches, magic, or Bengal lights."

"It is fearful," whispered the countess.

"Listen attentively to my questions," continued Balsamo.

"I listen with my whole being."

"First tell me how many persons are with me at this moment."

"Two."

"Of what sex?"

"A man and a woman."

"Read the man's name in my thoughts."

"The Duc de Richelieu."

"And the woman's?"

"Madame the Comtesse Dubarry."

"Ha!" said the duke, "this is becoming serious."

"I never saw anything like it," murmured the trembling countess.

"Good!" said Balsamo; "now read the first sentence of the letter I hold in my hand."

The voice obeyed. The duke and the countess looked at each other with astonishment bordering upon admiration.

"What has become of the letter I wrote at your dictation?"

"It is hastening on."

"In which direction?"

"Toward the East."

"Is it far?"

"Yes, very far."

"Who is carrying it?"

"A man dressed in a green vest, leathern cap, and large boots."

"On foot or on horseback?"

"On horseback."

"What kind of a horse?"

"A piebald horse."

"Where do you see him?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Look," said Balsamo, imperatively.

"On a wide road planted with trees."

"But on which road?"

"I do not know; all the roads are alike."

"What! does nothing indicate what road it is, — no post nor inscription?"

"Stay, stay! A carriage is passing near the man on horseback; it crosses his course, coming toward me."

"What kind of carriage?"

"A heavy carriage, full of abbés and soldiers."

"A stage coach," murmured Richelieu.

"Is there no inscription upon the carriage?" asked Balsamo.

"Yes," said the voice.

"Read it."

"'VERSAILLES' is written in yellow letters upon the carriage, but the word is nearly effaced."

"Leave the carriage, and follow the courier."

"I do not see him now."

"Why do you not see him?"

"Because the road turns."

"Turn the corner, and follow him."

"Oh! he is going as fast as he can urge on his horse; he looks at his watch."

"What do you see in front of the horse?"

"A long avenue, splendid buildings, a large town."

"Follow him still."

"I follow."

"Well?"

"The courier redoubles his blows, the animal is bathed in perspiration; its iron-shod hoofs strike the pavement so loudly that all the passers-by look round. Ah! the courier dashes into a long street which descends. He turns to the right. He slackens his horse's speed. He stops at the door of a large hôtel."

"Now you must follow him attentively, do you hear?"

The voice heaved a sigh.

"You are tired. I understand."

"Oh! crushed with weariness."

"Cease to be fatigued; I will it."

"Ah! thanks."

"Are you still fatigued?"

"No."

"Do you still see the courier?"

"Yes, yes; he ascends a large stone staircase. He is preceded by a valet in blue and gold livery. He crosses large salons full of splendid gilt ornaments. He stops at a small lighted cabinet. The valet opens the door and retires."

"What do you see?"

"The courier bows."

"To whom does he bow?"

"He bows to a man seated at a desk, with his back toward the door."

"How is the man dressed?"

"Oh! in full dress, as if he were going to a ball."

"Has he any decoration?"

"He wears a broad blue ribbon crosswise on his breast.'

"His face?"

"I cannot see it. Ah! —"

"What?"

"He turns."

"What sort of features has he?"

"A keen glance, irregular features, beautiful teeth."

"What is his age?"

"From fifty to fifty-eight years."

"The duke!" whispered the countess to the marshal; "it is the duke!"

The marshal made a sign as if to say, "Yes, it is he; but listen."

"Well?" asked Balsamo.

"The courier gives a letter to the man with the blue ribbon —"

"You may say to the duke; he is a duke."

"The courier," repeated the obedient voice, "takes a letter from the leathern bag behind him and gives it to the duke. The duke breaks the seal and reads it attentively."

"Well?"

"He takes a pen and a sheet of paper and writes."

"He writes?" said Richelieu. "The devil! if we could only know what he writes!"

"Tell me what he writes," commanded Balsamo.

"I cannot."

"Because you are too far away. Enter the room. Are you there?"

"Yes."

"Look over his shoulder."

"I am doing so."

"Now read."

"The writing is bad, small, irregular."

"Read it; I will it."

The countess and Richelieu held their breaths.

"Read!" repeated Balsamo, more imperatively still.

"'My sister,'" said the voice, trembling and hesitating.

"It is the reply," said the countess and Richelieu in the same breath.

"'My sister,'" continued the voice, "'do not be uneasy. The crisis took place, it is true; it was a dangerous one, — that is true also; but it is over. I am anxiously awaiting to-morrow, for to-morrow it will be my turn to act on the offensive, and everything leads me to expect a decisive triumph. What you say of the parliament of Rouen, Milord X., and the petards, is all satisfactory. To-morrow, after my interview with the king, I shall add a postscript to my letter, and send it you by the same courier.'"

Balsamo, with his left hand extended, seemed to drag each word painfully from the voice, while with the right hand he hastily took down those lines which Monsieur de Choiseul was at the same time writing in his cabinet at Versailles.

"Is that all?" asked Balsamo.

"That is all."

"What is the duke doing now?"

"He folds the paper on which he has just written, and puts it into a small portfolio, which he takes from the pocket in the left side of his coat."

"You hear?" said Balsamo to the almost stupefied countess. "Well?"

"Then he sends away the courier."

"What does he say to him?"

"I heard only the end of the sentence."

"What was it?"

"'At one o'clock at the postern gate of Trianon.' The courier bows and retires."

"Yes," said Richelieu, "he makes an appointment to meet the courier when his audience is over, as he says in his letter."

Balsamo made a sign with his hand to command silence. "What is the duke doing now?" he asked.

"He rises. He holds in his hand the letter he has received. He goes straight toward his bed, enters the passage between it and the wall, and presses a spring which opens an iron box. He throws the letter into the box and closes it."

"Oh," cried the countess and the duke, turning pale, "this is magic, indeed!"

"Do you know now all that you wished to know, Madame?" asked Balsamo.

"Count," said Madame Dubarry, approaching him with terror, "you have rendered me a service which I would pay with ten years of my life, — or rather, which I can never pay. Ask what you wish."

"Oh, Madame, you know we already have an account!"

"Speak; say what you wish."

"The time has not yet come."

"Well, when it comes, if it were a million —"

Balsamo smiled.

"Oh, Countess," exclaimed the marshal, "you should rather ask the count for a million! Cannot a man who knows what he knows, and who sees what he sees, discover diamonds and gold in the bosom of the earth as easily as he discovers the thoughts in the heart of man?"

"Then, Count," said the countess, "I prostrate myself before you in my weakness."

"No, Countess. One day you will pay your debt to me; I shall give you the opportunity."

"Count," said Richelieu to Balsamo, "I am conquered, crushed. I believe."

"As Saint Thomas believed, Duke. I do not call that believing, but seeing."

"Call it what you will, I will make the *amende honorable;* and in future if I am asked about sorcerers I shall know what to say."

Balsamo smiled. "Madame," said he to the countess, "will you permit me to do one thing now?"

"Speak."

"My spirit is wearied. Let me restore it to liberty by a magic formula."

"Do so, Monsieur."

"Lorenza," said Balsamo in Arabic, "thanks! I love you. Return to your apartment by the same way you came, and wait for me. Go, my beloved."

"I am very tired," replied in Italian the voice, softer still than even during the evocation. "Hasten, Acharat."

"I come;" and the footsteps were heard retreating with the same rustling noise with which they had approached.

Then Balsamo, after a few moments' interval, during which he convinced himself of Lorenza's departure, bowed profoundly, but with majestic dignity, to his visitors, who returned to their carriage more like intoxicated persons than human beings gifted with reason, so much were they occupied by the crowd of tumultuous ideas which assailed them.

CHAPTER XLI.

DISGRACE.

THE next morning, as the great clock of Versailles struck eleven, King Louis XV. issued from his apartment, and crossing the adjoining gallery, called in a loud and stern voice, "Monsieur de la Vrillière."

The king was pale, and seemed agitated. The more he endeavored to hide his emotion, the more it was manifest in the embarrassment of his looks and the rigid tension of his usually impassive features.

A death-like stillness pervaded the long ranks of courtiers, among whom the Duc de Richelieu and Comte Jean Dubarry might be seen, both seemingly calm, and affecting indifference or ignorance as to what was going on.

The Duc de la Vrillière approached, and took a *lettre-de-cachet* from the king's hand.

"Is the Duc de Choiseul at Versailles?" asked the king.

"Yes, Sire. He returned from Paris yesterday, at two o'clock in the afternoon."

"Is he in his hôtel, or in the chateau?"

"In the chateau, Sire."

"Carry this order to him, Duke," said the king.

A shudder ran through the whole file of spectators, who bent down whispering, like ears of corn under the blast of a tornado. The king, frowning as if he wished to add terror to this scene, haughtily entered his cabinet, followed by the captain of the guard and the commandant of the Light Horse.

All eyes followed Monsieur de la Vrillière, who slowly crossed the courtyard and entered Monsieur de Choiseul's apartments, rather uneasy at the commission with which he was charged.

In the mean time loud and eager conversations, some threatening, some timid, burst forth on all sides around the old marshal, who pretended to be even more surprised than the others, but who, thanks to his cunning smile, deceived no one.

Monsieur de la Vrillière returned, and was immediately surrounded.

"Well?" cried every one.

"Well, it was an order of banishment."

"Of banishment?"

"Yes, in due form."

"Then you have read it, Duke?"

"I have."

"Really?"

"Judge for yourselves."

And the Duc de la Vrillière repeated the following lines, which he had treasured up with the retentive memory which marks the true courtier: —

My Cousin, — The displeasure which your conduct causes me obliges me to exile you to Chanteloup, whither you must repair in four and twenty hours from this time. I should have sent you farther, had it not been for the particular esteem I feel for Madame de Choiseul, in whose health I am much interested. Take care that your conduct does not force me to proceed to further measures.

A long murmur ran through the group which surrounded Monsieur de la Vrillière.

"And what did he reply to you, Monsieur de St. Florentin?" asked Richelieu, affecting not to give to the duke either his new name or his new title.

"He replied, 'Monsieur le Duc, I am satisfied that you find much pleasure in being the bearer of this letter.'"

"That was severe, my poor Duke," said Jean.

"What could you expect, Monsieur le Vicomte? A man does not receive such a tile on his head without crying out a little."

"Do you know what he will do?" asked Richelieu.

"Why, according to all probability he will obey."

"Ahem!" said the marshal.

"Here is the duke coming!" said Jean, who stood as sentinel at the window.

"Coming here?" exclaimed the Duc de la Vrillière.

"I said so, Monsieur de St. Florentin. He is crossing the courtyard," continued Jean.

"Alone?"

"Quite alone, — his portfolio under his arm."

"Oh, good heavens!" said Richelieu, "is yesterday's scene to be repeated?"

"Do not speak of it; I shudder at the thought," replied Jean.

He had scarcely spoken, when the Duc de Choiseul appeared at the entrance of the gallery, with head erect and confident look, alarming his enemies, or those who would declare themselves such on his disgrace, by his calm and piercing glance. As no one expected this step after what had happened, no one opposed his progress.

"Are you sure you read correctly, Duke?" asked Jean.

"Of course!"

"And he returns after such a letter as you have described?"

"Upon my honor, I cannot understand it."

"The king will send him to the Bastille."

"That would cause a fearful commotion."

"I should almost pity him."

"Look, he is going to the king! It is incredible."

In fact, without paying attention to the show of resistance which the astounded usher offered, Monsieur de Choiseul entered the king's cabinet. Louis, on seeing him, uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

The duke held his *lettre-de-cachet* in his hand, and showed it to the king almost smilingly. "Sire," said he, "as your Majesty had the goodness to forewarn me yesterday, I have indeed received a letter to-day."

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the king.

"And as your Majesty had the goodness yesterday to tell me not to look upon any letter as serious which was not ratified by the express words of the king, I have come to request an explanation."

"It will be very short, Monsieur le Duc," replied the king. "To-day the letter is valid."

"Valid?" said the duke. "So offensive a letter to so devoted a servant?"

"A devoted servant, Monsieur, does not make his master play a ridiculous part."

"Sire," replied the minister, haughtily, "I was born near the throne that I might comprehend its majesty."

"Monsieur," replied the king, in a severe voice, "I will not keep you in suspense. Yesterday evening you received a courier from Madame de Grammont in your cabinet at Versailles."

"It is true, Sire."

"He brought you a letter."

"Are a brother and sister forbidden to correspond?"

"Wait a moment, if you please. I know the contents of that letter."

"Oh, Sire!"

"Here it is; I took the trouble to copy it with my own

hand." And the king handed to the duke an exact copy of the letter he had received.

"Sire!"

"Do not deny it, Duke; you placed the letter in an iron coffer standing at your bedside."

The duke became pale as a ghost.

"That is not all," continued the king, pitilessly; "you have replied to Madame de Grammont's letter. I know the contents of that letter also. It is there in your portfolio, and wants only the postscript, which you are to add when you leave me. You see I am well informed, do you not?"

The duke wiped his forehead, on which the large drops of perspiration were standing, bowed without uttering a word, and left the cabinet tottering as if he had been struck with apoplexy. Had it not been for the fresh air which fanned his face, he must have fallen. But he was a man of strong will. When he reached the gallery he had regained his strength, and with head erect he passed the hedge of courtiers, and entered his apartments in order to burn divers papers and lock up others. A quarter of an hour afterward he left the chateau in his carriage.

Monsieur de Choiseul's disgrace was a thunderbolt which set all France in flames. The parliament, sustained in reality by the tolerance of the minister, proclaimed that the State had lost its firmest pillar. The nobility supported him as being one of themselves. The clergy felt themselves soothed by this man, whose personal dignity, often carried even to the extent of pride, gave a sacerdotal effect to his ministerial functions.

The encyclopedist, or the philosophical, party, who were very numerous and also very strong, because they were reinforced by all the enlightened, clever, and cavilling spirits of the age, cried out loudly when the government

was taken from the hands of a minister who admired Voltaire, pensioned the "Encyclopédie," and preserved, by developing them in a more useful manner, the traditions of Madame de Pompadour, the female Mecænas of the writers for the "Mercure" and of philosophers in general.

The people had far better grounds for complaint than any of the other malecontents. They also complained, but without reasoning; and, as they always do, they hit the truth and laid bare the bleeding wound.

Monsieur de Choiseul, absolutely speaking, was a bad minister and a bad citizen; but relatively he was a paragon of virtue, of morality, and of patriotism. When the people, dying of hunger in the fields, heard of his Majesty's prodigality and of Madame Dubarry's ruinous whims; when open warnings were sent him, such as "L'homme aux Quarante Écus," or counsels like those in "Le Contrat Social," or, secretly, revelations like the "Nouvelles à la Main," and the "Idées Singulières d'un Bon Citoyen," — then the people were terrified at the prospect of falling back into the impure hands of the favorite, "less respectable than a collier's wife," as Bauveau said, and into the hands of the favorite's favorites; and wearied with so much suffering, they were alarmed to behold the future looking even blacker than the past.

It was not that the people, who had antipathies, had any well-defined sympathies. They did not like the parliament, because they who ought to have been their natural protectors had always abandoned them for idle inquiries, questions of precedence, or selfish interests, and because, dazzled by the reflected light of the royal omnipotence, they imagined themselves something like an aristocracy, occupying an intermediate place between the nobility and the people.

The people disliked the nobility by instinct and by remembrance. They feared the sword as much as they

hated the Church. Their position could not, therefore, be affected by the disgrace of Monsieur de Choiseul, but they heard the complaints of the nobility, of the clergy, of the parliament; and this noise, joined to their own murmurs, made an uproar which intoxicated them.

The consequence of these feelings was regret, and a sort of a quasi-popularity for the name of Choiseul. All Paris — the word in this case can be justified by the facts — accompanied the exile on his way to Chanteloup as far as the town gates. The people lined the road which the carriage was to take, while the members of the parliament and the court who could not be received by the duke stationed themselves in their carriages in advance of the crowd of people, that they might salute him as he passed and bid him adieu.

The procession was the densest at the Barrière d'Enfer, which is on the road to Touraine, at which place there was such a conflux of foot-passengers, horsemen, and carriages that the traffic was interrupted for several hours.

When the duke had crossed the barrier, he found himself escorted by more than a hundred carriages, which formed a sort of triumphal halo around him. Acclamations and sighs still followed him; but he had too much sense and penetration not to know that all this noise was not so much occasioned by regret for him personally, as by the fear of those persons unknown, who were to be lifted up by his downfall.

At a short distance from the barrier a post-chaise, driven at great speed along the crowded road, met the procession; and had it not been for the skill of the postilion, the horses, white with foam and dust, would have dashed against Monsieur de Choiseul's equipage. A head leaned forward from the carriage window, and Monsieur de Choiseul also leaned from his.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon bowed profoundly to the fallen minister whose heritage he had come to obtain. Monsieur de Choiseul threw himself back in the carriage : a single second had sufficed to wither the laurels which had crowned his disgrace.

But at the same moment, as a compensation, no doubt, a carriage drawn by eight horses and bearing the royal arms of France, which was seen advancing along the cross road from Sèvres to St. Cloud, and which, whether by accident or on account of the crowd, did not turn into the highroad, also crossed before Monsieur de Choiseul's carriage. The dauphiness, with her lady of honor, Madame de Noailles, was on the back seat of the carriage ; on the front was Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney. Monsieur de Choiseul, crimson with exultation and joy, bent forward out of the door and bowed profoundly.

"Adieu, Madame," said he, in a low voice.

"Au revoir, Monsieur de Choiseul," replied the dauphiness, with an imperial smile and a majestic contempt of all etiquette.

"Long live Monsieur de Choiseul!" cried a voice enthusiastically, after the dauphiness had spoken.

At the sound of the voice Mademoiselle Andrée turned round quickly.

"Make way ! make way !" cried her Highness's grooms, forcing Gilbert, pale as death and eager to see, to range himself with the other people on the road.

It was indeed our hero, who in his philosophical enthusiasm had cried out, "Long live Monsieur de Choiseul!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE DUC D'AIGUILLON.

While melancholy visages and red eyes were the order of the day on the road from Paris to Chanteloup, Luciennes was radiant with blooming faces and charming smiles. It was because at Luciennes was enthroned, no longer a mere mortal, the most beautiful and most adorable of mortals, as the poets and courtiers declared, but a veritable divinity who governed France.

The evening after Monsieur de Choiseul's disgrace, therefore, the road leading to Luciennes was thronged with the same carriages which in the morning had rolled after the exiled minister. There were, besides, the partisans of the chancellor, and the votaries of corruption and self-interest; and altogether they made an imposing procession.

But Madame Dubarry had her police, and Jean knew, to a baron, the names of those who had strewn the last flowers over the expiring Choiseuls. He gave a list of these names to the countess, and those who bore them were pitilessly excluded; while the courage of others in braving public opinion was rewarded by the protecting smile and frank welcome of the goddess of the day. What joy and what congratulations echoed on all sides! Pressings of the hand, little smothered laughs, and enthusiastic applause, seemed to have become the habitual language of the inhabitants of Luciennes.

After the great throng of carriages and the general crowd followed the private receptions. Richelieu, the secret and modest hero, indeed, but yet the real hero of the day, saw the crowd of visitors and petitioners pass away, and remained the last in the countess's boudoir.

"It must be confessed," said the countess, "that the Comte de Balsamo, or de Fenix, whichever name you give him, Marshal, is one of the first men of the age. It would be a thousand pities if they still burned sorcerers."

"Certainly, Countess, he is a great man," replied Richelieu.

"And a very handsome man too; I have taken quite a fancy for him, Duke."

"You will make me jealous," said Richelieu, laughing, and eager besides to direct the conversation to a more serious subject. "The Comte de Fenix would make a dreadful minister of police."

"I was thinking of that," replied the countess; "only it is impossible."

"Why, Countess?"

"Because he would render colleagues impossible."

"How so?"

"Knowing everything, seeing all their play —"

Richelieu blushed beneath his rouge. "Countess," he replied, "if he were my colleague, I would wish him to see into mine always, and communicate the cards to you; for you would ever see the knave of hearts on his knees before the queen, and prostrate at the feet of the king."

"No one has more wit than you, my dear Duke," replied the countess. "But let us talk a little of our ministry. I think you mentioned that you had sent word to your nephew —"

"D'Aiguillon? He has arrived, Madame, and with what Roman augurs would have called the best conjunc-

tion of omens possible, — his carriage met Choiseul's leaving Paris."

"That is indeed a favorable omen," said the countess. "Then he is coming here?"

"Madame, I thought that if Monsieur d'Aiguillon was seen at Luciennes at such a time, it would give rise to unpleasant comment; I begged him, therefore, to remain in the village until I should send for him by your orders."

"Send for him immediately, then, Marshal, for we are alone, or very nearly so."

"The more willingly that we quite understand each other, — do we not, Countess?"

"Certainly, Duke. You prefer war to finance, do you not? Or do you wish for the marine?"

"I prefer war, Madame; I can be of most service in that department."

"True; I will speak of it to the king. You have no antipathies?"

"For whom?"

"For any colleagues his Majesty might present to you?"

"I am the least difficult man in the world to live with, Countess; but allow me to send for my nephew, since you are good enough to grant him the favor of an audience."

Richelieu approached the window and looked into the courtyard, now illumined by the last rays of the setting sun. He made a sign to one of his footmen, who was watching the window, and who darted off as soon as he received the signal.

Lights were now brought in.

Ten minutes after the footman had disappeared, a carriage rolled into the courtyard. The countess turned quickly toward the window. Richelieu saw the move-

ment, which seemed to him an excellent prognostic for Monsieur d'Aiguillon's affairs, and consequently for his own. "She likes the uncle," said he to himself. "and she is in a fair way to like the nephew. We shall be masters here." While he was in the enjoyment of these chimerical visions, a slight noise was heard at the door, and the confidential valet, throwing it open, announced the Duc d'Aiguillon.

The duke was a very handsome and graceful nobleman, richly, and at the same time elegantly and tastefully, dressed. Monsieur d'Aiguillon had passed the age of youth, but he was one of those men who, whether judged by their looks or by their minds, seem young until old age renders them infirm. The cares of government had traced no wrinkles on his brow; they had only enlarged the natural fold which seems to be the birthplace of great thoughts both in statesmen and in poets. His air and carriage were lofty and commanding, and his handsome features wore an expression at once of intelligence and melancholy, as if he knew that the hatred of ten millions of men weighed upon his head, but at the same time wished to prove that the weight was not beyond his strength.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon had the most beautiful hands in the world; they looked white and delicate even when buried in the softest folds of lace. A well-turned leg was prized very highly at that period, and the duke's was a model of manly elegance and aristocratic form. He combined the suavity of the poet with the nobility of the lord and the suppleness and ease of the dashing guardsman. He was thus a beau-idéal for the countess in the three several qualities which the instinct of this beautiful sensualist taught her to love.

By a remarkable coincidence, or rather by a chain of

circumstances skilfully contrived by Monsieur d'Aiguillon, these two objects of public animadversion, the favorite and the courtier, had never yet encountered one another at court, with all their respective attractions.

For the last three years Monsieur d'Aiguillon had managed to be very busy either in Brittany or in his cabinet, and had not once shown himself at court, knowing well that a favorable or unfavorable crisis must soon take place. In the first case it would be better to be comparatively unknown; in the second, to disappear without leaving any trace behind, and thus be able easily to emerge from the gulf under new auspices and in a new character. Another motive influenced his calculations, — a motive which is the mainspring of romance, but which nevertheless was the most powerful of all.

Before Madame Dubarry was a countess, and every evening touched the crown of France with her lips, she had been a lovely creature, smiling and adored; she had been loved, — a happiness she could no longer hope for, since she was feared.

Among the young, rich, powerful, and handsome men who had paid court to Jeanne Vaubernier, among the rhymers who had harnessed in verse the words *Lange* and *ange*, the Duc d'Aiguillon had formerly figured in the first rank; but either because the duke was not sufficiently ardent, or because Mademoiselle Lange was not so easily pleased as her detractors pretended, or because the sudden attachment of the king separated two hearts ready to unite, Monsieur d'Aiguillon reclaimed his verses, acrostics, bouquets, and perfumes, and Mademoiselle Lange closed her door in the Rue des Petits-Champs. The duke hastened to Brittany, suppressing his sighs; Mademoiselle Lange wafted all hers toward Versailles, to the Baron de Gonesse, — that is, the king of France.

D'Aiguillon's sudden disappearance had at first troubled Madame Dubarry very little, for she feared the remembrances of the past; but when subsequently she observed the continued silence of her former admirer, she at first had been annoyed, then astonished, and being in a good position for judging of men, she had concluded by thinking him a man of tact and discretion. For the countess this was a great distinction; but it was not all, and the time might come when she would think D'Aiguillon a man of heart.

We have seen that the marshal, in all his conversations with Madame Dubarry, had never touched upon the subject of his nephew's acquaintance with Mademoiselle Lange. This silence on the part of a man accustomed, as the old duke was, to say the most difficult things in the world, had much surprised, and even alarmed, the countess. She therefore impatiently awaited Monsieur d'Aiguillon's arrival, to know how to conduct herself, and to ascertain whether the marshal had been discreet, or merely ignorant.

The duke entered, respectful, but with an air of freedom, and sufficiently confident in himself to draw a distinction in his salutation between the reigning sultana and the court lady. By this discriminating tact he instantly gained a protectress quite disposed to find good perfect, and perfection wonderful.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon then took his uncle's hand, and the latter, advancing toward the countess, said in his most insinuating voice: "The Duc d'Aiguillon, Madame. It is not so much my nephew as one of your most ardent servants whom I have the honor to present to you."

The countess glanced at the duke as the marshal spoke, and looked at him as women can look, — that is to say, with eyes which nothing escapes. But she saw only two

heads bowing respectfully before her, and two faces serene and calm after the salutation.

"I know, Marshal, that you love the duke," said the countess. "You are my friend. I shall request Monsieur d'Aiguillon, therefore, in deference to his uncle, to imitate him in all that will be agreeable to me."

"That is the conduct I have already marked out for myself, Madame," said D'Aiguillon, with another bow.

"You have suffered much in Brittany?" asked the countess.

"Yes, Madame; and it is not yet over," replied D'Aiguillon.

"I believe it is, Monsieur; besides, here is Monsieur de Richelieu, who will be a powerful aid to you."

D'Aiguillon looked at Richelieu as if surprised.

"Ah!" said the countess, "I see that the marshal has not yet had time to have any conversation with you. That is very natural, as you have just arrived from a journey. Well, you must have a thousand things to say to each other, and I will therefore leave you, Marshal, for the present. Monsieur le Duc, consider yourself at home here."

So saying, the countess retired; but she did not go far away. Behind the boudoir opened a large cabinet filled with all sorts of fantastic baubles, with which the king was accustomed to amuse himself when he came to Luciennes. He preferred this cabinet to the boudoir, because in it one could hear all that was said in the next room. Madame Dubarry, therefore, was certain to hear the whole conversation between the duke and his nephew, and she counted upon forming from it a correct and final opinion of the latter.

But Richelieu was not duped; he knew most of the secrets of every royal and ministerial residence. To listen

when people were speaking of him was one of his devices; to speak while others were overhearing him was one of his ruses. He determined, therefore, still animated by the favorable reception of D'Aiguillon, to proceed in the same vein, and to reveal to the favorite, under cover of her supposed absence, a plan of secret happiness and great power, complicated with intrigues, — a double allurement, which a pretty woman, and especially a woman of the court, rarely can resist. He desired the duke to be seated, and said to him, "You see, Duke, I am installed here?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I see it."

"I have had the good-fortune to gain the favor of this charming woman, who is looked upon as a queen here, and who is one in reality."

D'Aiguillon bowed.

"I must tell you, Duke," continued Richelieu, "what I could not say in the open street, — that Madame Dubarry has promised me a portfolio."

"Ah!" said D'Aiguillon, "that is only your desert, Monsieur."

"I do not know whether I deserve it or not; but I am to have it, — rather late in the day, it is true. Then, situated as I shall be, I shall endeavor to advance your interests, D'Aiguillon."

"Thank you, Monsieur le Duc; you are a kind relative, and have often proved it."

"You have nothing in view, D'Aiguillon?"

"Absolutely nothing, except to escape being degraded from my title of duke and peer, as the parliament demand."

"Have you supporters anywhere?"

"Not one."

"You would have fallen, then, but for this new turn in public affairs?"

"At full length, Monsieur le Duc."

"Ah! you talk like a philosopher. The devil! for that reason I speak to you roughly, my poor D'Aiguillon, — more like a minister than an uncle."

"Uncle, your goodness penetrates me with gratitude."

"When I sent for you in such a hurry you may be sure it was because I wished you to play an important part here. Let me see. Have you reflected on the part Monsieur de Choiseul played for ten years?"

"Yes; certainly his was an enviable position."

"Enviable! Yes, enviable, when with Madame de Pompadour he governed the king and exiled the Jesuits; but very sad when, having quarrelled with Madame Dubarry, who is worth a hundred Pompadours, he was dismissed from office in twenty-four hours. You do not reply."

"I am listening, Monsieur, and endeavoring to discover your meaning."

"You like Monsieur de Choiseul's first part best, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"Well, my dear Duke, I have decided upon playing this part."

D'Aiguillon turned abruptly toward his uncle. "Do you speak seriously?" said he.

"Yes. Why not?"

"You will be Madame Dubarry's lover?"

"Ah, the devil! you go too fast. But I see you understand me. Yes, Choiseul was very lucky; he governed the king, and governed his mistress. It is said that he was a lover of Madame de Pompadour, — in fact, why not? Well, no, I cannot act the lover; your cold smile tells me that plainly! You, with your young eyes, look at my furrowed brow, my bending knees, and my

withered hands, which were once so beautiful. Instead of saying, when I was speaking of Choiseul's part, that I would play it, I should have said we will play it."

"Uncle!"

"No, she cannot love me, I know it; nevertheless, — I may confess it to you without fear, for she will never learn it, — I could have loved this woman beyond everything — but — "

D'Aiguillon frowned.

"But," continued Richelieu, "this part, which my age renders impossible for me, I will divide."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Aiguillon.

"Some one of my family," continued Richelieu, "will love Madame Dubarry. *Parbleu!* a glorious chance, — such an accomplished woman!" and Richelieu, in saying these words, raised his voice. "You know it cannot be Fronsac, — a degenerate wretch, a fool, a coward, a rogue, a gambler. Duke, will you be the man?"

"I?" cried D'Aiguillon; "are you mad, Uncle?"

"Mad! What! you are not already on your knees before him who gives you this advice? What! you do not bound with joy; you do not burn with gratitude? You are not already out of your senses with delight at the manner in which she received you? You are not yet mad with love? Go, go!" cried the old marshal; "since the days of Alcibiades there has been but one Richelieu in the world, and I see there will be no more after him."

"Uncle," replied the duke, with much agitation, either feigned, and in that case it was admirably counterfeited, or real, for the proposition was sudden, "I perceive all the advantage you would gain by the position of which you speak; you would govern with the authority of Monsieur de Choiseul, and I should be the lover who would establish that authority. The plan is worthy of the cleverest

man in France; but you have forgotten one thing in projecting it."

"What!" cried Richelieu, uneasily, "is it possible you do not love Madame Dubarry? Is that it? Fool! triple fool! wretch! is that it?"

"Ah, no! it is not that, my dear uncle," cried D'Aiguillon, as if he knew that not one of his words was lost; "Madame Dubarry, whom I scarcely know, seems to me the most beautiful and the most charming of women. I should, on the contrary, love Madame Dubarry madly, — I should love her only too well; that is not the question."

"What is it, then?"

"This, Monsieur le Duc. Madame Dubarry will never love me, and the first condition of such an alliance is love. How do you imagine that the beautiful countess could distinguish among all the gentlemen of this brilliant court — surrounded as she is by the homage of so much youth and beauty — how could she distinguish one who has no merit, who is already no longer young, who is overwhelmed with sorrows, and who hides himself from all eyes because he feels that he will soon disappear forever? Uncle, if I had known Madame Dubarry in the period of my youth and beauty, when women admired in me all that is lovable in a man, then she might have given me a place in her memory. That would have been much. But now there is nothing, — neither past, nor present, nor future. No, Uncle, we must renounce this chimera. You have pierced my heart by presenting it to me in such bright and glowing colors."

During this tirade, which was delivered with a fire which Molé might have envied, and Lekain would have thought worthy of imitation, Richelieu bit his lips, muttering to himself: "Has the man understood that the

countess is listening? *Peste!* he is a clever dog. He is a master of his craft. In that case I must take care!"

Richelieu was right; the countess was listening, and every word D'Aiguillon spoke sank deep into her heart. She eagerly drank in the charm of this confession, and appreciated his exquisite delicacy in not betraying the secret of their former intimacy to his nearest confidant, for fear of throwing a shadow over a perhaps still dearly cherished portrait.

"Then you refuse?" said Richelieu.

"Oh! as for that, yes, Uncle; for unfortunately I see it is impossible."

"But try, at least, unhappy man!"

"And how?"

"You are here one of us; you will see the countess every day, — please her, *morbleu!*"

"With an interested aim? Never! If I should be so unfortunate as to please her, with this selfish end in view, I should flee to the end of the world, for I should be ashamed of myself."

Richelieu scratched his chin. "The thing is done," said he to himself, "or D'Aiguillon is a fool."

Suddenly a noise was heard in the courtyard, and several voices cried out, "The king!"

"The devil!" cried Richelieu; "the king must not see me here, — I will make my escape."

"And I?" said D'Aiguillon.

"It is different with you, — he must see you. Remain; and for God's sake, do not throw the handle after the axe."

With these words Richelieu stole out by the back-stairs, saying as he left the room, "Adieu till to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE KING DIVIDES THE SPOILS.

When the Duc d'Aiguillon was left alone, he felt at first somewhat embarrassed. He had perfectly understood all his uncle had said to him, perfectly understood that Madame Dubarry was listening, perfectly understood, in short, that it was necessary to a man of intelligence to be, in this emergency, a man of heart, and to play alone that part in which the old marshal sought to obtain a share.

The king's arrival very opportunely prevented the explanation which must have resulted from the puritanical declaration of Monsieur d'Aiguillon; for the marshal was not a man to remain long a dupe, — especially was he not likely to consent to make another's virtue shine with exaggerated brilliancy at the expense of his own. But being left alone, D'Aiguillon had time to reflect.

The king had in truth arrived. Already his pages had opened the door of the antechamber, and Zamore had darted toward the monarch, begging for bonbons, — a touching familiarity which Louis, when he was in a bad temper, punished by sundry fillips on the nose or boxes on the ears, both exceedingly disagreeable to the young African.

The king installed himself in the Chinese cabinet; and what convinced D'Aiguillon that Madame Dubarry had not lost a word of his conversation with his uncle, was the fact that he, D'Aiguillon, overheard the entire interview between Madame Dubarry and the king.

His Majesty seemed fatigued, like a man who has raised an immense weight. Atlas was less enfeebled when his day's work was done, and when he had held the world suspended on his shoulders for twelve hours. Louis XV. allowed his favorite to thank, applaud, and caress him, and tell him all the particulars of Monsieur de Choiseul's departure, which amused him exceedingly.

Then Madame Dubarry ventured. It was fair weather for politics; and besides, she felt herself strong enough at that moment to move one of the four quarters of the world. "Sire," said she, "you have destroyed, that is well; you have demolished, that is superb: but now you must think about rebuilding."

"Oh! it is done," said the king, carelessly.

"You have a ministry?"

"Yes."

"What! all at once, without breathing?"

"See what it is to want common-sense. Oh! — woman that you are — before sending away your cook, must you not, as you said the other day, have a new one in readiness?"

"Repeat to me that you have formed the cabinet."

The king raised himself upon the immense sofa on which he was lying rather than sitting, using the shoulders of the beautiful countess for his principal cushion. "One would think, Jeannette," said he, "to hear you making yourself so uneasy, that you know my ministry, and wish to find fault with them, or propose another."

"Well," said the countess, "that would not be so absurd as you seem to imagine."

"Indeed? Then you have a ministry."

"You have one, have you not?" she replied.

"Oh! it is my place to have one, Countess. Tell me your candidates."

"By no means; tell me yours."

"Most willingly, to set you the example."

"In the first place, then, the navy, where that dear Monsieur de Praslin was?"

"Ah! something new, Countess, — a charming man, who has never seen the sea."

"Who is it?"

"'Pon honor, it is a splendid idea. I shall make myself very popular, and I shall be crowned in the most distant seas, — in effigy, of course."

"But who, Sire, who is it?"

"I would wager you do not guess in a thousand attempts. It is a member of parliament, my dear, — the first president of the parliament of Besançon."

"Monsieur de Boynes?"

"Himself. *Peste*, how learned you are! You know all these people?"

"I cannot help it; you talk parliament to me the whole day. Why, the man would not know an oar if he saw it."

"So much the better. Monsieur de Praslin knew his duties too well, and cost me too much with his naval constructions."

"Well, the finance department, Sire?"

"Oh! that is a different affair; I have chosen a specialist."

"A financier?"

"No; a soldier. The financiers have crushed me too long already."

"Good heavens! And the war department?"

"Do not be uneasy; for that I have chosen a financier, Terray. He is a terrible scrutinizer of accounts. He will find errors in all Monsieur de Choiseul's additions. I may tell you that I had some idea of putting a wonderful man

in the war department, — every inch a man, as they say; it was to please the philosophers."

"Good. But who, — Voltaire?"

"Almost. The Chevalier de Muy, — a Cato."

"Oh, Heaven! You alarm me."

"It was all arranged. I had sent for the man, his commission was signed, he had thanked me, when my good or my evil genius — judge which — prompted me to ask him to come to Luciennes this evening to sup and chat with us."

"Fie! Horrible!"

"Well, Countess, that was exactly what De Muy replied."

"He said that to you?"

"Expressed in other words, Countess. He said that his most ardent wish was to serve the king; but as for serving Madame Dubarry, it was impossible."

"Well, that was polite of your philosopher."

"You must know, Countess, I held out my hand to him, — for his appointment, which I tore in pieces with a most patient smile, and the chevalier disappeared. Louis XIV. would have let the rascal rot in one of those ugly dens in the Bastille; but I am Louis XV., and I have a parliament which gives me the whip, in place of my giving it to the parliament. That is the difference."

"No matter, Sire," said the countess, covering her royal lover with kisses, "you are not the less a clever man."

"That is not what the world in general says. Terray is execrated."

"Who is not? And for foreign affairs?"

"That honest fellow Bertin, whom you know."

"No."

"Then whom you do not know."

"But among them all I cannot find one good minister."

"So be it; now tell me yours."

"I will tell you only one."

"You do not tell me; you are afraid."

"The marshal."

"The marshal! What marshal?" said the king, making a wry face.

"The Duc de Richelieu."

"That old man? That milksop?"

"Good! The conqueror of Mahon a milksop!"

"An old debauchee —"

"Sire, your companion."

"An immoral man, who makes all the women run away."

"That is only since he no longer runs after them."

"Do not speak to me of Richelieu; he is my *bête noire*. The conqueror of Mahon took me into all the bad places in Paris. We were lampooned. No, no! Richelieu, — the very name puts me beside myself!"

"You hate them so much?"

"Whom?"

"The Richelieus."

"I abhor them."

"All?"

"All. What a worthy duke and peer Monsieur Fronsac makes! He has deserved the rack twenty times."

"I give him up; but there are more Richelieus in the world than he."

"Ah! yes, — D'Aiguillon."

"Well?"

The reader may judge whether, at these words, the nephew in the boudoir did not listen intently.

"I ought to hate him more than the others, for he hounds all the bawlers in France upon me; and yet — it is a weakness which I cannot conquer — he is bold, and does not displease me."

"He is a man of spirit," cried the countess.

"A brave man, and zealous in the defence of the royal prerogative. He is a model of a peer."

"Yes, yes, — a hundred times, yes! Make something of him."

The king looked at the countess and folded his arms. "What, Countess! Is it possible that you propose such a thing to me, when all France demands that I should exile and degrade this man?"

Madame Dubarry folded her arms in her turn. "Just now," said she, "you called Richelieu a milksop; the name belongs more properly to yourself."

"Oh, Countess!"

"You are very proud because you have dismissed Monsieur de Choiseul."

"Well, it was not an easy task."

"You have done it, and you have done well; but you are afraid of the consequences."

"I?"

"Of course. What do you accomplish by sending away Monsieur de Choiseul?"

"I give the parliament a kick in the seat of honor."

"And you will not give two! What the devil! Raise both your feet, — one after the other, be it understood. The parliament wished to keep Choiseul; you send him away. They want to send away D'Aiguillon; keep him."

"I do not send him away."

"Keep him, — improved and considerably enlarged."

"You want an office for this firebrand?"

"I want a recompense for him who defended you at the risk of his position and fortune."

"Say of his life; for he will be stoned some fine morning, in company with your friend Maupeou."

"You would encourage your defenders very much, if they could only hear you."

"They pay me back with interest, Countess!"

"Do not say so; facts contradict you in this case."

"Ah, well! But why this eagerness for D'Aiguillon?"

"Eagerness! I do not know him; I have seen and spoken to him to-day for the first time."

"Ah! that is a different affair. Then it is from conviction of his merit? I respect conviction in others, because I never have it myself."

"Then give Richelieu something in D'Aiguillon's name, since you will not give D'Aiguillon anything in his own."

"Richelieu, nothing! Never, never, never!"

"Then something to Monsieur d'Aiguillon, since you refuse Richelieu?"

"What, give him a portfolio? That is impossible at present."

"I understand that; but after some time, perhaps. Remember that he is a man of resources and action, and that with Terray, D'Aiguillon, and Maupeou, you will have the three heads of Cerberus. Remember, too, that your ministry is only a jest, which cannot last."

"You are mistaken, Countess; it will last three months."

"In three months, then, I have your promise?"

"Oh, oh, Countess!"

"That is enough; in the mean time, something for the present."

"But I have nothing."

"You have the Light Horse; Monsieur d'Aiguillon is an officer, — what is called a sword. Give him your Light Horse."

"Very well; he shall have them."

"Thanks!" exclaimed the countess, transported with joy, "a thousand thanks!" and Monsieur d'Aiguillon

could hear a very plebeian kiss resound on the cheeks of his Majesty Louis XV.

"In the mean time," said the king, "order supper to be served, Countess."

"No," said she, "there is nothing here; you have overpowered me with politics. My people have made speeches and fireworks, but no supper."

"Then come to Marly; I will take you with me."

"Impossible! my poor head is splitting in pieces."

"With headache?"

"A terrible headache."

"You must go to bed, Countess."

"I am just going to do so, Sire."

"Adieu, then!"

"Au revoir, rather!"

"I am somewhat like Monsieur de Choiseul; I am dismissed."

"Yes, but accompanied, feasted, cajoled," said the giddy creature, pushing the king gently toward the door, and thence to the foot of the stairs, laughing loudly, and turning round at each step. On the peristyle the countess stopped, candle in hand.

"Countess," said the king, turning round and ascending a step.

"Sire?"

"I trust the poor marshal will not die of it."

"Of what?"

"Of the portfolio which he has missed."

"How ill-natured you are!" said the countess, saluting him with another loud laugh; and his Majesty drove off, very much delighted with his last witticism upon the duke, whom he really hated.

When Madame Dubarry returned to her boudoir, she found D'Aiguillon on his knees before the door, his hands

clasped, his eyes ardently fixed upon her. She blushed. "I have failed," said she. "The poor marshal!"

"Oh, I know all!" said he; "I could hear. Thanks, Madame, thanks!"

"I thought I owed you that," she replied, with a sweet smile; "but rise, Duke, else I shall think your memory is as retentive as your mind is highly cultivated."

"That may well be, Madame; my uncle has told you I am nothing but your admiring and zealous servant."

"And the king's; to-morrow you must go and pay your respects to his Majesty. Rise, I beg;" and she gave him her hand, which he kissed respectfully.

The countess seemed to be deeply moved, for she did not add a single word. Monsieur d'Aiguillon was also silent, as deeply moved as she. At last Madame Dubarry, raising her head, said: "Poor marshal! he must be informed of this defeat."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon looked upon these words as a dismissal, and bowed. "Madame," said he, "I am going to him."

"Oh, Duke! unpleasant news is always soon enough told. Do something better, — stay and have supper with me!"

The duke was stirred by a fragrance of youth and love which inflamed and rejuvenated the blood of his heart. "You are not a woman," said he, "you are — "

"An angel, am I not?" the warm lips of the countess said in his ear, touching him at the same time; and she conducted him to the table.

That evening Monsieur d'Aiguillon might well call himself fortunate, for he gained his uncle's portfolio and ate from the dish of the king.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ANTECHAMBERS OF THE DUC DE RICHELIEU.

Monsieur de Richelieu, like all the courtiers, had a house at Versailles, one at Paris, one at Marly, and another at Luciennes, — a residence, in short, near each of the palaces or residences of the king.

Louis XIV., when he multiplied his places of residence so much, had imposed on all men of rank, — on all those privileged to attend at the grand and little receptions and levees, — the obligation of being very rich, that they might keep pace at once with the splendor of his household and the flight of his caprices.

At the period of the disgrace of Messieurs de Choiseul and de Praslin, Monsieur de Richelieu was living in his house at Versailles ; and thither he returned after having presented his nephew to Madame Dubarry at Luciennes.

Richelieu had been seen in the forest of Marly with the countess ; he had been seen at Versailles after the minister's disgrace ; his long and secret audience at Luciennes was known, — and this, with the indiscretions of Jean Dubarry, was sufficient reason for the whole court to think themselves obliged to go and pay their respects to Monsieur de Richelieu.

The old marshal was now in his turn about to inhale that delightful incense of praises, flatteries, and caresses which every interested person offered, without discrimination, to the idol of the day.

Monsieur de Richelieu, however, was far from expecting all that was to happen to him; but he rose that morning with the firm resolution of closing his nostrils against the incense, as Ulysses closed his ears with wax against the songs of the sirens. The result which he expected could not be known until the next day, when the nomination of the new minister would be announced by the king himself.

Great was the marshal's surprise, therefore, when he awoke, or rather was awakened by the loud noise of carriages, to hear from his valet that the courtyards of the hôtel, as well as the ante-rooms and salons, were filled with visitors. "Oh!" said he, "it seems I make some noise already."

"It is still early, Monsieur le Maréchal," said his valet, seeing the duke's haste in taking off his nightcap.

"Henceforward," replied the duke, "there will be on such word as 'early' for me; remember that."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"What did you reply to the visitors?"

"That you were not up yet."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"That was exceedingly stupid. You should have added that I was up late last night, or better still, you should have — Let me see, where is Rafté?"

"Monsieur Rafté is asleep," said the valet.

"What, asleep? Let him be called, the wretch!"

"Well," said a fresh and smiling old man who appeared at the door, "here is Rafté; what is he wanted for?"

All the duke's bombast ceased at these words. "Ah! I was certain that you were not asleep."

"And if I had been asleep, where would have been the wonder? It is scarcely daylight."

"But, my dear Rafté, you see that I do not sleep."

"That is another thing; you are a minister, — how should you sleep?"

"Oh! now you are going to scold me," said the marshal, grimacing before the glass; "are you not satisfied?"

"I! What benefit is it to me? You will fatigue yourself to death, and then you will be ill. The consequence will be that I shall have to govern the State, and that is not so amusing, Monseigneur."

"How old you are growing, Rafté!"

"I am just four years younger than yourself, Monseigneur. Yes, I am growing old."

The marshal stamped with impatience. "Did you come through the antechamber?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who is there?"

"Everybody."

"What do they speak of?"

"Every one is telling what favors he is going to ask from you."

"That is very natural. But what did you hear about my appointment?"

"Oh! I would much rather not tell you that."

"What! criticisms already?"

"Yes, and from those who have need of your assistance! What will those say, Monseigneur, whose assistance you need?"

"Ah! Rafté," said the old man, affecting to laugh, "those who would say you flatter me — "

"Well, Monseigneur," said Rafté, "why the devil did you harness yourself to this wagon called a ministry? Are you tired of living and of being happy?"

"My dear fellow, I have tasted everything but that."

"*Corbleu!* you have never tasted arsenic! Why do you not take some in your chocolate, from curiosity?"

"Rafté, you are an idle dog; you think that, as my secretary, you will have more work, and you shrink from it, — you confessed as much, indeed."

The marshal dressed himself with care. "Give me a military air," said he to his valet, "and hand me my military orders."

"It seems we are in the war department?" said Rafté.

"Why, yes; it seems we are there."

"Oh! but I have not seen the king's appointment," continued Rafté; "this is irregular."

"The appointment will come in good time, no doubt."

"Then 'no doubt' is the countersign to-day?"

"You become more disagreeable, Rafté, as you get older. You are a formalist and purist. If I had known that, I would not have allowed you to deliver my inauguration speech at the Académie; it is that which made you pedantic."

"But listen, Monseigneur; since we are in the government, let us be regular. This is a very odd affair."

"What is odd?"

"Monsieur le Comte de la Vaudraye, whom I met just now in the street, told me that nothing had yet been settled about the ministry."

Richelieu smiled.

"Monsieur de la Vaudraye is right," said he. "But have you already been out, then?"

"*Pardieu!* I was obliged to go out. This cursed noise of carriages awoke me. I dressed, put on my military orders also, and took a turn in the town."

"Ah! Monsieur Rafté makes merry at my expense."

"Oh, Monseigneur, God forbid! But —"

"But what?"

"On my walk, I met some one."

"Whom?"

"The secretary of the Abbé Terray."

"Well?"

"Well! he told me that he himself was appointed to the war department."

"Oh! ho!" said Richelieu, with his eternal smile.

"What does Monseigneur conclude from this?"

"That if Monsieur Terray is appointed to the war department, I am not; that if he is not, perhaps I am."

Rafté had satisfied his conscience; he was a bold, indefatigable, ambitious man, as clever as his master, and much better armed than he, for he knew that his master was of humble origin, and that he had been in dependent circumstances, — two defects in his coat of mail which for forty years had exercised all his cunning, strength, and activity of mind. When Rafté saw his master so confident, he believed that he himself had nothing more to fear.

"Come, Monseigneur," said he, "make haste; do not oblige them to wait too long; that would be a bad beginning."

"I am ready; but tell me once more who is there?"

"Here is the list." He presented a long list to his master, who read with increasing satisfaction names prominent among the nobility, in the law, and in finance.

"Suppose I should be popular, hey, Rafté?"

"We are in the age of miracles," replied the latter.

"Ha, Taverney!" said the marshal, continuing to peruse the list. "What does he come here for?"

"I have not the least idea, Monseigneur; but come, make your entrée;" and the secretary, with an authoritative air, almost pushed his master into the grand salon.

Richelieu ought to have been satisfied; his reception

might have contented the ambition of a prince of the blood. But the refined cunning and craft which characterized the period, and particularly the class of society we are speaking of, only too well assisted Richelieu's unlucky star, which had such a severe disappointment in store for him.

Through regard for propriety and respect for etiquette, all the assembly abstained from pronouncing the word "minister" before Richelieu; some were bold enough to venture as far as the word "congratulation," but they knew that they must pass quickly over the word, and that Richelieu would scarcely reply to it. For one and all, this morning visit was a simple demonstration of respect, a mere expression of good-will; at this period such almost imperceptible shades of distinction were frequently understood and acted upon by the general mass of the community.

There were certain of the courtiers who ventured, in the course of conversation, to express some desire or hope. This one would have wished, he said, to have his government rather nearer Versailles, and it gratified him to have an opportunity of speaking on the subject to a man of so great influence as Monsieur de Richelieu. Another said he had been three times forgotten by Monsieur de Choiseul in the promotions of the knights of the order, and he reckoned upon Monsieur de Richelieu's obliging memory to refresh the king's, now that there existed no obstacle in the way of his Majesty's good-will. In short, a hundred requests, more or less grasping, but all veiled by the highest art, were preferred to the delighted ears of the marshal.

Gradually the crowd retired; they wished, as they said, to leave the marshal to his "important occupations." One man alone remained in the salon. He had not approached

as the others had; he had asked for nothing; he had not even presented himself. When the courtiers had gone, this man advanced toward the duke with a smile upon his lips.

"Ah, Monsieur de Taverney!" said the marshal, "I am enchanted to see you, truly enchanted."

"I was waiting, Duke, to pay you my compliments and to offer you my sincere congratulations."

"Ah! indeed, and for what?" replied Richelieu; for the cautious reserve of his visitors had imposed upon him the necessity of being discreet, and even mysterious.

"On your new dignity, Duke."

"Hush, hush!" said the marshal; "let us not speak of that. Nothing is settled; it is a mere rumor."

"Nevertheless, my dear Marshal, there are many people of my opinion, for your salons were full."

"In truth, I do not know why."

"Oh! I know very well."

"Why then? Why?"

"It was owing to a single word from me."

"What word?"

"Yesterday I had the honor of paying my respects to the king at Trianon. His Majesty spoke to me of my children, and ended by saying: 'You know Monsieur de Richelieu, I think; pay your compliments to him.'"

"Ah! his Majesty said that?" replied Richelieu, with a glow of pride, as if these words had been the official appointment, the issue of which Rafté doubted, or at least deplored the delay.

"So that," continued Taverney, "I suspected the truth, — in fact, it was not difficult to do so, when I saw the eagerness of all Versailles; and I hastened to obey the king by paying my compliments to you, and to gratify my own feelings by reminding you of our old friendship."

The duke had now reached the excitement of intoxication. It is a defect in our nature from which the highest minds cannot always preserve themselves. He saw in Taverney only one of those expectants of the lowest order, — poor devils who have fallen behind on the road of favor, who are useless even as protégés, useless as acquaintances, and who are reproached with coming forth from their obscurity, after a lapse of twenty years, to warm themselves at the sun of another's prosperity.

"I see what you are aiming at," said the marshal, harshly; "you have some favor to ask of me."

"You have said it, Duke."

"Ah!" grumbled Richelieu, seating himself on, or rather plumping into, the sofa.

"I told you I had two children," continued Taverney, pliant and cunning; for he perceived the coolness of his great friend, and therefore only advanced the more eagerly. "I have a daughter whom I love very dearly, and who is a model of virtue and beauty. She is placed with her Highness the Dauphiness, who has been condescending enough to grant her her particular esteem. Of my beautiful Andrée, therefore, I need not speak to you. Her path is smoothed; her fortune is made. Have you seen my daughter? Did I not once present her to you somewhere? Have you not heard of her?"

"Pshaw! I don't know," said Richelieu, carelessly; "perhaps so."

"No matter," pursued Taverney, "there is my daughter settled. For my own part, I want nothing; the king grants me a pension upon which I can live. I confess I should like to have some emolument to enable me to rebuild Maison Rouge, where I wish to end my days, and with your interest and my daughter's —"

"Eh!" said Richelieu to himself, who until now had

not listened, so lost was he in contemplation of his grandeur, but whom the words, "my daughter's interest," had roused from his revery. "Eh! eh! your daughter! Why, she is a young beauty who annoys our good countess; she is a little scorpion who is sheltering herself under the wings of the dauphiness, in order to bite some one at Luciennes. Come, I will not be a bad friend; and as for gratitude, this dear countess who has made me a minister shall see if I am wanting in time of need." Then aloud, "Proceed," said he to the Baron de Taverney, in a haughty tone.

"Faith, I am near the end," replied the latter, promising himself to laugh in his sleeve at the vain marshal if he could only get what he wanted from him. "I am anxious therefore only about my son Philippe, who bears a lofty name, but who will never be able to support it worthily, unless some one assists him. Philippe is a bold and thoughtful youth, — rather too thoughtful, perhaps; but that is the result of his embarrassed position. You know the horse which is reined in too tightly droops its head."

"What is all this to me?" thought Richelieu, giving most unequivocal signs of weariness and impatience.

"I want some one," continued Taverney, remorselessly, "some one in authority like yourself, to procure a company for Philippe. Her Highness the Dauphiness, on entering Strasburg, raised him to the rank of captain; but he still wants a hundred thousand francs to enable him to purchase a company in some privileged regiment of cavalry. Procure that for me, my powerful friend."

"Your son," said Richelieu, "is the young man who rendered the dauphiness a service, is he not?"

"A great service," replied Taverney. "It was he who forced the last relay for her Royal Highness from that Dubarry who wanted to seize it by force."

"Oh, oh!" thought Richelieu, "that is just it, — the most violent enemies of the countess. He comes at the right time, this Taverney! He advances claims which are sufficient to damn him forever."

"You do not answer, Duke!" said Taverney, rather soured by the marshal's obstinate silence.

"All that is impossible, my dear Monsieur de Taverney," replied the marshal, rising, to show that the audience was over.

"Impossible? Such a trifle impossible? An old friend tells me that?"

"Why not? Is it any reason, because you are a friend, as you say, that you should seek to make me commit treason both against friendship and justice? You never came to see me for twenty years, for during that time I was nothing; now that I am a minister, you come."

"Monsieur de Richelieu, it is you who are unjust at this moment."

"No, my dear friend, no; I do not wish to see you dangling in my antechambers. I am a true friend, and therefore — "

"You have some reason for refusing me, then?"

"I!" exclaimed Richelieu, much alarmed at the suspicion Taverney might perhaps form; "I, a reason!"

"Yes; I have enemies."

The duke might have replied what he thought; but that would have been to discover to the baron that he tried to please Madame Dubarry through gratitude; it would have been to confess that he was the minister of the favorite, — and that the marshal would not have confessed for an empire. He therefore hastily replied: "You have no enemy, my dear friend, but I have many. To grant requests at once, without examining claims, would expose me

to the accusations of continuing the Choiseul system. My dear fellow, I wish to leave behind some trace of my administration of affairs. For twenty years I have projected reforms, improvements; and now they shall blossom. Favoritism is the ruin of France; I will protect merit. The writings of our philosophers are bright torches, whose light has not shone for me in vain; they have dissipated all the mists of ignorance and superstition which brooded over the past; and it was full time it should be so for the well-being of the State. I shall therefore examine your son's claims, neither more nor less than I should do those of any other citizen. I must make this sacrifice to my conscience, — a grievous sacrifice, no doubt, but which after all is only that of one man for the benefit of three hundred thousand. If your son, Monsieur Philippe de Taverney, proves that he merits my favor, he shall have it, not because his father is my friend, not because he bears the name he does, but because he is a man of merit. That is my plan of conduct."

"You mean your system of philosophy," replied the old baron, biting his nails with rage, and adding to his anger by reflecting how much humiliation and how many petty cowardices this interview had cost him.

"Philosophy if you will, Monsieur; it is a noble word."

"Which dispenses good things, Marshal, does it not?"

"You are a bad courtier," said Richelieu, with a cold smile.

"Men of my rank are courtiers only of the king."

"Oh! Monsieur Rafté, my secretary, has a thousand of your rank in my antechambers every day," replied Richelieu; "they generally come from some obscure den or other in the provinces, where they have learned to be rude to their pretended friends while they preach concord."

"Oh! I am well aware that a Maison Rouge, of a rank which dates from the crusades, does not understand concord so well as a Vignerot fiddler."

The marshal had more tact than Taverney. He could have had him thrown out of the windows, but he only shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "You are rather behind the time, Monsieur, of the crusades; you remember only the calumnious memoir presented by parliament in 1720, and have not read that of the peers and dukes in reply. Be kind enough to walk into my library, my dear Monsieur; Rafté will give it to you to read."

As Richelieu was bowing his antagonist out with this apt repartee, the door opened, and a man entered noisily, crying, "Where is my dear duke?"

This man, with ruddy visage, eyes dilated with satisfaction, and joyous air, was neither more nor less than Jean Dubarry.

On seeing this new-comer, Taverney started back with surprise and vexation. Jean saw the movement, recognized the face, and turned his back.

"I understand," said the baron, quietly, "and I shall retire. I leave Monsieur the minister in fitting company." And he left the room with dignity.

CHAPTER XLV.

DISENCHANTMENT.

Furious at this very irritating exit, Jean made two steps after the baron; then, returning to the marshal, he said, shrugging his shoulders, "You receive such people here?"

"Oh, my dear fellow, you mistake! On the contrary, I send such people away."

"Do you know who this gentleman is?"

"Alas! yes."

"No, but do you know, really?"

"He is a Taverney."

"He is a man who wishes to make his daughter the king's favorite —"

"Oh, come!"

"A man who wishes to supplant us, and who takes all possible means to do so. But Jean is there, and Jean has his eyes about him."

"You think he wishes —"

"It is a very difficult matter to see what he wishes, is it not? One of the dauphin's party, my dear man; and they have their little assassin too."

"Bah!"

"A young man quite ready to fly at people's throats, — a bully, who pinks Jean's shoulder, — poor Jean!"

"Yours? Is it a personal enemy of yours, my dear Viscount?" asked Richelieu, feigning surprise.

"Yes; he was my adversary in that affair of the relay, you know."

"Indeed! What a strange sympathy! I did not know that, and yet I refused all his demands; only, if I had known, I should not only have refused him, but kicked him out. But do not be uneasy, Viscount; I have now this worthy bully under my thumb, and he shall find it out."

"Yes, you can cure him of his taste for attacking people on the highway. For in fact — Oh, by the by, I have not yet congratulated you!"

"Why, yes, Viscount; it seems the affair is definitively settled."

"Oh! it is all completed. Will you permit me to embrace you?"

"With all my heart."

"Faith! there was some trouble; but the trouble is nothing when you succeed. You are satisfied, are you not?"

"Shall I speak frankly? Yes! for I think I can be useful."

"No doubt of that. But it is a bold stroke; there will be some growling."

"Am I not liked by the public?"

"You? Why, there is no question of you, either one way or other; it is he who is execrated."

"He?" said Richelieu, with surprise; "who is he?"

"Of course," interrupted Jean. "Oh! the parliament will revolt; it will be a second edition of the flagellation of Louis XIV. They are whipped, Duke, they are whipped."

"Explain."

"Why, it explains itself. The parliament, of course, hate the author of their persecutions."

"Ah! you think that?"

"I am certain of it, as all France is. No matter, Duke,

it was a capital stroke of you to send for him that way, just at the very heat of the affair."

"Whom? Whom, Duke? I am on thorns; I do not understand one word of what you say."

"Why, I speak of Monsieur d'Aiguillon, your nephew."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, I say it was well-advised of you to send for him."

"Ah! very good, very good. You mean to say he will assist me?"

"He will assist us all. Do you know he is on the best terms with little Jeanne?"

"Oh! really?"

"On the best terms. They have already had a chat together, and understand each other perfectly, as it seems to me."

"You know that?"

"It is very clear. Jeannette is the laziest dormouse in existence."

"Ah!"

"She does n't leave her bed before nine, ten, or eleven o'clock."

"Yes; well?"

"Well, this morning, at Luciennes, it was six o'clock at the latest when I saw D'Aiguillon's carriage starting off."

"At six o'clock?" cried Richelieu, smiling.

"Yes."

"In the morning, — this morning?"

"In the morning, — this morning. You can judge that, to get up so early to give an audience to your nephew, Jeanne must be pretty fond of him."

"Yes, yes," said Richelieu: "six o'clock! Bravo, D'Aiguillon!"

"The audience must have begun at five o'clock, — in the night! It is wonderful."

"It is wonderful," repeated the marshal; "wonderful indeed, my dear Jean."

"And so there you are all three, like Orestes and Pylades, with the addition of another Pylades."

At this moment, and as the marshal was rubbing his hands in great glee, D'Aiguillon entered the salon. The nephew saluted his uncle with an air of condolence which was sufficient to enable Richelieu, without understanding the whole truth, at least to guess the greatest part of it. He turned pale, as though he had received a mortal wound. It flashed across his mind that at court there exist neither friends nor relatives, and that every one seeks only his own aggrandizement. "I was a great fool!" he said to himself. "Well, D'Aiguillon?" continued he, aloud, repressing a deep sigh.

"Well, Marshal?"

"It is a heavy blow to the parliament," said Richelieu, repeating Jean's words.

D'Aiguillon blushed. "You know it?" said he.

"The count has told me all," replied Richelieu, "even of your visit at Luciennes before daylight this morning. Your appointment is indeed a triumph for my family."

"Be assured, Marshal, of my extreme regret."

"What the devil does he mean by that?" said Jean, folding his arms.

"Oh! we understand each other," interrupted Richelieu; "we understand each other."

"That is a different affair; but for my part, I do not understand you. Regret! Ah! yes, because he will not be recognized as minister immediately, — yes, yes; I see."

"Oh! there will be an interim?" said the marshal, feeling a ray of hope — that constant guest in the heart of

the ambitious man and the lover — once more dawn in in his breast.

"Yes, Marshal, an interim."

"But in the mean time," cried Jean, "he is tolerably well paid, — the finest command in Versailles."

"Ah! a command?" said Richelieu, pierced by a new wound.

"Monsieur Dubarry perhaps exaggerates a little," said the Duc d'Aiguillon.

"But, in one word, what is this command?"

"The king's Light Horse."

Richelieu's furrowed cheeks again turned pale. "Oh! yes," said he, with a smile which it would be impossible to describe, "yes, it is indeed a trifling appointment for such a charming man. But what can you expect, Duke? The loveliest woman in the world, were she even the king's favorite, can give only what she has."

It was now D'Aiguillon's turn to grow pale. Jean was scrutinizing the beautiful Murillos which adorned Richelieu's walls. Richelieu slapped his nephew on the shoulder. "Luckily," said he, "you have the promise of approaching advancement. Accept my congratulations, Duke, — my sincere compliments. Your address, your cleverness in negotiations, is only equalled by your good fortune. Adieu; I have some business to transact. Do not forget me in the distribution of your favors, my dear minister."

D'Aiguillon replied only, "Your interests and mine, Monsieur le Maréchal, are henceforth one and the same;" and saluting his uncle, he left the room with the dignity which was natural to him, — thus escaping from one of the most embarrassing positions he had ever experienced in a life strewn with so many difficulties.

"An admirable trait in D'Aiguillon's character," said

Richelieu, the moment the former had disappeared, to Jean, who was rather at a loss to know what to think of this exchange of politeness between the nephew and uncle, "and one that I admire particularly, is his artlessness. He is at once frank and high-spirited; he knows the court, and is withal as simple-minded as a girl."

"And then he loves you so well," said Jean.

"Like a lamb."

"Oh!" said Jean, "he is more like your son than Monsieur de Fronsac."

"By my faith, yes, Viscount; by my faith, yes!" While replying thus, Richelieu kept walking round his chair in great agitation; he sought, but could not find.

"Ah, Countess!" he muttered, "you shall pay me for this!"

"Marshal," said Jean, with a cunning look, "we four will realize that famous fagot of antiquity, — you know, the one that could not be broken."

"We four, my dear Monsieur Jean! How do you understand that?"

"My sister as power, D'Aiguillon as authority, you as advice, and I as vigilance."

"Very good, very good!"

"And now let them attack my sister; I defy them all."

"*Pardieu!*" said Richelieu, whose brain was boiling.

"Let them set up rivals now!" exclaimed Jean, in ecstasies with his plans and his visions of triumph.

"Oh!" said Richelieu, striking his forehead.

"Well, my dear Marshal, what is the matter?"

"Nothing! I think your idea of a league admirable."

"Is it not?"

"And I enter body and soul into your plans."

"Bravo!"

"Does Taverney live at Trianon with his daughter?"

"No; he lives in Paris."

"The girl is very handsome, my dear Viscount."

"If she were as beautiful as Cleopatra or — my sister, I do not fear her, now that we are leagued together."

"You say Taverney lives in Paris? In the Rue St. Honoré, I think."

"I did not say Rue St. Honoré; it is the Rue Coq-Héron in which he lives. Have you any plan of chastising these Taverneys, that you ask?"

"Yes, Count, I think I have found a capital plan."

"You are an incomparable man. I must leave you; I wish to see what they say in town."

"Adieu, then, Count. By the way, you have not told me who the new ministers are."

"Oh, mere birds of passage, — Terray, Bertin, and I know not who else. Mere counters in the hands of D'Aiguillon, the real minister, though his appointment is deferred for a short time."

"Perhaps indefinitely deferred," thought the marshal, directing his most gracious smile to Jean as an affectionate adieu.

Jean retired. Rafté entered. He had heard all, and knew how to conduct himself; all his suspicions were now realized. He did not utter a word to his master; he knew him too well. He did not even call the valet; he assisted him with his own hands to undress, and conducted him to his bed, in which the old marshal, shivering with fever, immediately buried himself, after taking a pill which his secretary made him swallow.

Rafté drew the curtains and retired. The antechamber was thronged with eagerly listening valets. Rafté took the head valet aside.

"Attend to the marshal carefully," said he, "he is ill.

He has had a serious vexation this morning; he was obliged to disobey the king."

"Disobey the king!" exclaimed the alarmed valet.

"Yes, his Majesty sent a portfolio to Monseigneur, but as he was aware that he owed it to the solicitations of the Dubarry, he refused. Oh! it was a noble resolve, and the Parisians ought to build him a triumphal arch; but the shock was great, and our master is ill. Look to him carefully!"

After these words, whose circulating power he knew beforehand, Rafté returned to his closet. A quarter of an hour afterward all Versailles was informed of the noble conduct and lofty patriotism of the marshal, who in the mean time slept soundly upon the popularity his secretary had gained for him.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DAUPHIN'S FAMILY REPAST.

The same day, about three o'clock, Mademoiselle Taverney left her apartment to attend upon the dauphiness, who had the custom of listening to reading before dinner. The abbé who had held the post of first reader to her Royal Highness no longer exercised his functions, as for some time previous, after certain diplomatic intrigues in which he had displayed a very great talent for business, he had employed himself entirely in important political affairs.

Mademoiselle Taverney set out, then, dressed as well as circumstances would permit, to fulfil her office. Like all the guests at Trianon, she still suffered considerable inconvenience from the rather sudden installation in her new abode, and had not yet been able to arrange her furniture, or make the necessary provisions for establishing her modest household. She had, therefore, on the present occasion, been assisted in her toilet by one of the maids of Madame de Noailles, that starched lady of honor whom the dauphiness nicknamed Madame Etiquette.

Andrée was dressed in a blue silk robe, with long waist, which fitted admirably to her slender figure. This robe opened in front, and displayed a muslin skirt relieved with three falls of embroidery. Short sleeves, also of muslin, embroidered in the same manner as the dress, festooned, and tapering to the shoulder, were admirably in keeping with a neckerchief embroidered in the peasant style, which modestly concealed her neck and shoulders.

Her beautiful hair, which fell in long and luxuriant ringlets upon her shoulders, was simply tied with a ribbon of the same color as her dress, — a mode of arrangement which harmonized infinitely better with the noble, yet modest and retiring air of the lovely young girl, and with her pure and transparent complexion, never yet sullied by the touch of rouge, than the feathers, ornaments, and laces which were then in vogue.

As she walked, Andrée drew on a pair of white silk mittens upon the slenderest and roundest fingers in the world, while the tiny points of her high-heeled shoes of pale-blue satin left their traces on the gravel of the garden walk. When she reached the pavilion of Trianon, she was informed that the dauphiness was taking a turn in the grounds with her architect and her head-gardener. In the apartment of the first story overhead she could hear the noise of a turning-lathe, with which the dauphin was making a safety-lock for a coffer which he valued very highly.

In order to rejoin the dauphiness, Andrée had to cross the parterre, where, notwithstanding the advanced period of the season, flowers, carefully covered through the night, raised their pale heads to bask in the setting rays of a sun even paler than themselves. And as the evening was already closing in, for in that season it was dark at six o'clock, the gardener's apprentices were employed in placing the bell-glasses over the most delicate plants in each bed.

While traversing a winding alley of evergreens clipped into the form of a hedge, bordered on each side by beds of Bengal roses, and opening on a beautiful lawn, Andrée suddenly perceived one of these gardeners, who, when he saw her, stood up, leaning on his spade, and bowed with a more refined and studied politeness than was to be expected in one of his station. She looked again, and in this workman recognized Gilbert, whose hands, notwith-

standing his labor, were yet white enough to excite the envy of Monsieur de Taverney.

Andrée blushed in spite of herself; it seemed to her that Gilbert's presence in this place was too remarkable a coincidence to be the result of chance. Gilbert repeated his bow, and Andrée returned it, but without slackening her pace. She was too upright and too courageous, however, to resist the promptings of her heart, and leave the question of her restless soul unanswered. She turned back; and Gilbert, whose cheek had already become as pale as death, and whose dark eye followed her retreating steps with a sombre look, felt as if suddenly restored to life, and bounded forward to meet her.

"You here, Monsieur Gilbert?" said Andrée, coldly.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"By what chance?"

"Mademoiselle, one must live, and live honestly."

"But do you know that you are very fortunate?"

"Oh, yes, Mademoiselle, very fortunate!" said Gilbert.

"I beg your pardon! What did you say?"

"I said, Mademoiselle, that I am, as you think, very fortunate."

"Who introduced you here?"

"Monsieur de Jussieu, a protector of mine."

"Ah!" said Andrée, surprised, "then you know Monsieur de Jussieu?"

"He is the friend of my first protector, — of my master, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Courage, then, Monsieur Gilbert?" said Andrée, making a movement to proceed.

"Do you find yourself better, Mademoiselle?" asked Gilbert, in a trembling voice.

"Better? What do you mean?" said Andrée, coldly.

"Why, the accident."

"Oh, yes, thank you, Monsieur Gilbert; I am better, — it was nothing."

"Oh, you were nearly perishing!" said Gilbert, almost speechless with emotion; "the danger was terrible."

Andrée now began to think that it was high time to cut short this interview with a workman in the most public part of the royal park.

"Good-day, Monsieur Gilbert," said she.

"Will Mademoiselle not accept a rose?" said Gilbert, trembling, and with drops of perspiration standing on his forehead.

"But, Monsieur," replied Andrée, "you offer me what is not yours to give."

Gilbert, surprised and overwhelmed by this reply, could not utter a word. His head drooped; but as he saw Andrée looking at him with something like a feeling of satisfaction at having manifested her superiority, he drew himself up, tore a branch covered with flowers from the finest of the rose-trees, and began to pull the roses to pieces with a coolness and dignity which surprised and startled the young girl.

She was too just and too kind-hearted not to see that she had gratuitously wounded the feelings of an inferior who had unthinkingly committed a breach of propriety. But like all proud natures who feel themselves in the wrong, she preserved silence, when perhaps an apology or a reparation was hovering upon her lips; and she immediately resumed her walk.

Gilbert added not a word either; he threw away the branch and resumed his spade. But his character was a mixture of pride and cunning; and while stooping to his work, he kept his eye stealthily fixed on Andrée's retreating figure. At the end of the walk she could not help looking round; she was a woman.

This weakness was sufficient for Gilbert; he said to himself that in this last struggle he had been victorious. "She is weaker than I am," thought he, "and I shall govern her. Proud of her beauty, of her name, of her advancing fortunes, indignant at my love, which she perhaps suspects, she is only the more an object of adoration to the poor working-man who trembles while he looks at her. Oh, this trembling, this emotion, unworthy of a man! Oh, these acts of cowardice which she makes me commit, — she shall one day repay me for them all! But to-day I have done enough," he added; "I have conquered the enemy. I, who ought to have been the weaker, since I love, have been a hundred times stronger than she."

He repeated these words with a wild burst of joy as he convulsively dashed back the dark hair from his thoughtful brow. Then he stuck his spade deep into the flower-bed, bounded through the hedge of cypress and yew-tree with the speed of a roe-buck, and light as the wind threaded a parterre of plants under bell-glasses, not one of which he touched, notwithstanding the furious rapidity of his career, and posted himself at the end of the diagonal he had made, in advance of Andrée, who followed the winding of the path. From his new position he saw her advancing, thoughtful and almost humble, her lovely eyes cast down, her motionless hand gently lying against her rustling dress. Concealed behind the thick hedge, Gilbert heard her sigh twice as if she were speaking to herself. At last she passed so close to the trees which sheltered him that had he stretched out his arm he might have touched hers, as a mad and feverish impulse prompted him to do. But he knit his brow with an energetic movement almost akin to hatred. and placing his trembling hand upon his heart. "Coward again!" said he

to himself. Then he added, softly, "But she is so beautiful!"

Gilbert might have remained for a considerable time sunk in contemplation, for the walk was long, and Andrée's step was slow and measured; but this walk was crossed by others, from which some troublesome visitor might at any moment make his appearance, — and Fate treated Gilbert so scurvily that a man did in fact advance from the first alley upon the left; that is to say, almost opposite the clump of evergreens behind which he was concealed.

This intruder walked with a methodic and measured step; he carried his head erect, held his hat under his right arm, and his left hand rested upon his sword. He wore a velvet coat underneath a pelisse lined with sable fur, and pointed his foot as he walked, which he did with the easy grace of a man of high rank and breeding.

This gentleman as he advanced perceived Andrée, and the young girl's figure evidently pleased him; for he quickened his pace and crossed over in an oblique direction, so as to reach as soon as possible the path on which Andrée was walking, and intercept her course.

When Gilbert perceived this personage he involuntarily gave a slight cry, and took to flight like a startled lapwing. The intruder's manœuvre was successful; he was evidently accustomed to it, and in less than three minutes he was in advance of Andrée, whom three minutes before he had been following at some distance.

When Andrée heard his footstep behind her, she moved aside a little to let the man pass; and when he had passed, she looked at him in her turn. The gentleman looked also, and most eagerly, he even stopped to see better; and returning after he had seen her features, "Ah! Mademoiselle," said he, in a very kind voice, "whither are you hastening so quickly, may I ask?"

At the sound of this voice Andrée raised her head and saw, about twenty paces behind her, two officers of the guards following slowly; she spied a blue ribbon peeping from beneath the sable pelisse of the person who addressed her, and pale and startled at this unexpected rencontre, and at being accosted thus graciously, she said, bending very low, "The king!"

"Mademoiselle —," replied Louis XV., approaching her; "pardon me, I have such bad eyes that I am obliged to ask your name."

"Mademoiselle de Taverney," stammered the young girl, so confused and trembling that her voice was scarcely audible.

"Oh, yes, I remember! I esteem myself fortunate in meeting you in Trianon, Mademoiselle," said the king.

"I was proceeding to join her Royal Highness the Dauphiness, who expects me," said Andrée, trembling more and more.

"I will conduct you to her, Mademoiselle," replied Louis XV.; "for I am just going, as a country neighbor, to pay a visit to my daughter. Be kind enough to take my arm, as we are going in the same direction."

Andrée felt a cloud pass before her eyes, and the blood flow in tumultuous waves to her heart. In fact, such an honor for the poor girl as the proffered arm of the king, the sovereign lord of all France, — such an unhoped-for, incredible piece of good fortune, a favor which the whole court might envy, — seemed to her like a dream. She made a reverence so profound and so expressive of an almost religious veneration that the king felt himself obliged to bow a second time. When Louis XV. was inclined to remember Louis XIV., it was always in matters of ceremonial and politeness. Such traditions, however, dated farther back; they were handed down from Henry IV.

The king offered his hand therefore to Andrée, who placed the burning points of her fingers upon the king's glove, and they continued to advance toward the pavilion, where, as the king had been informed, the dauphiness with her architect and her head-gardener would be found.

We can assure the reader that Louis XV., although not particularly fond of walking, chose to conduct Andrée to the little Trianon by the longest road. Although the king was apparently unaware of his error, the two officers who walked behind perceived it but too plainly, and bemoaned themselves bitterly, as they were lightly clad and the weather was cold.

They arrived too late to find the dauphiness where they had expected, as Marie Antoinette had just set out for Trianon, that she might not keep the dauphin waiting, for he liked to have his supper between six and seven o'clock. Her Royal Highness arrived therefore at the exact hour; and as the punctual dauphin was already upon the threshold of the salon, that he might lose no time in reaching the dining-room the moment the butler appeared, the dauphiness threw her mantle to a maid, took the dauphin's arm with a winning smile, and drew him into the dining-room.

The table was laid for the two illustrious hosts. They occupied the middle of the table, so as to leave vacant the upper end of the table, which, since several unexpected visits of the king, was never occupied in his Majesty's absence, even when there were many guests. At that end of the table the king's cover occupied a considerable space; but the butler, not expecting it to be occupied this evening, was conducting the service from that end.

Behind the dauphiness's chair, leaving the necessary space between for the valets to pass, was stationed Madame de Noailles, stiff and upright, and yet wearing as

amiable an expression on her features as she could conjure up for the festive occasion.

Near Madame de Noailles were some other ladies, whose position at the court gave them the right or entitled them to the favor of being present at the supper of their Royal Highnesses.

Three times a week Madame de Noailles sat at the same table with the dauphin and dauphiness; but on the other days she would not for anything in the world have missed being present. Besides, it was a delicate mode of protesting against the exclusion on four days out of seven.

Opposite the Duchesse de Noailles, surnamed by the dauphiness Madame Etiquette, was the Duc de Richelieu, on a raised seat very similar to her own. He also was a strict observer of forms; but his etiquette was undistinguishable to a casual observer, being always veiled beneath the most polished elegance, and sometimes the wittiest raillery. A consequence of this antithesis between the first gentleman of the bedchamber and the first lady of honor of the dauphiness was that the conversation, always dropped by the Duchesse de Noailles, was incessantly renewed by Monsieur de Richelieu.

The marshal had travelled through all the courts of Europe, and had adopted the tone of elegance in each which was best adapted to his character; so that, strong in tact and sense of fitness, he knew both what anecdotes to relate at the table of the youthful couple, and what would be seasonable at the private suppers of Madame Dubarry.

Perceiving this evening that the dauphiness had a good appetite, and that the dauphin was voracious, Richelieu concluded that they would give no heed to the conversation going on around them, and that he had consequently only to make Madame de Noailles suffer an hour of purga-

tory in anticipation. He began therefore to speak of philosophy and theatrical affairs, — two subjects of conversation doubly offensive to the venerable duchess. He related the subject of one of the last philanthropic sallies of the philosopher of Ferney, — the name already given to the author of the "Henriade;" and when he saw that the duchess was uneasy, he changed the text, and detailed all the squabbles and disputes which, in his office of gentleman of the chamber, he had to undergo in order to make the actresses in ordinary to the king play more or less badly.

The dauphiness loved the arts, and above all the theatre; she had sent a complete costume for Clytemnestra to Mademoiselle Raucourt, and she therefore listened to Monsieur de Richelieu not only with indulgence, but with pleasure.

Then the poor lady of honor, in violation of all etiquette, was forced to fidget on her bench, blow her nose noisily, and shake her venerable head, without thinking of the cloud of powder which at each movement fell upon her forehead, like the cloud of snow which envelops the summit of Mont Blanc at every gust of the north wind.

But it was not enough to amuse the dauphiness, the dauphin must also be pleased. Richelieu abandoned the subject of the theatre, for which the heir to the crown had never displayed any great liking, to discourse of humanity and philosophy. When he spoke of the English, he did so with all the warmth and energy which Rousseau displays in drawing the character of Edward Bromston.

Now, Madame de Noailles hated the English as much as she did philosophers. To admit a new idea was a fatiguing operation for her, and fatigue deranged the economy of her whole person. Madame de Noailles, who felt herself intended by nature for a conservative, growled at all new ideas like a dog at a frightful mask.

Richelieu in playing this game had a double end in view, — he tormented Madame Etiquette, which evidently pleased the dauphiness, and he threw in, here and there, some virtuous apophthegm, some axiom in mathematics, which was rapturously received by the dauphin, the royal amateur of exact sciences. He was paying his court, therefore, with great skill and address, and from time to time directing an eager glance toward the door, as if he expected some one who had not yet arrived, when a cry from the foot of the staircase echoed along the arched corridors, was repeated by two valets stationed at regular intervals from the entrance-door, and at last reached the dining-salon, "The king!"

At this magic word Madame de Noailles started bolt upright from her seat, as if moved by a spring; Richelieu rose more slowly, and with easy grace; the dauphin hastily wiped his mouth with his napkin, and stood up before his seat, his face turned toward the door. As for the dauphiness, she hastened toward the staircase to meet the king and do the honors of her mansion to him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE QUEEN'S HAIR.

The king still held Mademoiselle de Taverney by the hand when they reached the landing-place, and it was only on arriving there that he bowed to her, so courteously and so low that Richelieu had time to see the bow, to admire its grace, and to ask himself to what lucky mortal it was addressed. His ignorance did not long continue.

Louis XV. took the arm of the dauphiness, who had seen all, and had already clearly recognized Andrée. "My daughter," said he, "I come without ceremony to ask you for my supper. I crossed the entire park on my way hither, and happening to meet Mademoiselle de Taverney, requested her to accompany me."

"Mademoiselle de Taverney!" murmured Richelieu, almost dizzy at this unexpected stroke. "Faith, I am almost too fortunate!"

"I shall not only refrain from scolding Mademoiselle for being late," replied the dauphiness, graciously, "but I have to thank her for bringing your Majesty to us."

Andrée, whose cheeks were dyed with as deep a red as the ripe and tempting cherries which graced the epergne in the centre of the table, bowed without replying.

"The devil! the devil! she is indeed beautiful," thought Richelieu; "and that old scoundrel Taverney gave her no more praise than she deserves."

The king had already taken his seat at the table after having saluted the dauphin. Gifted, like his grandson, with an obliging appetite, the monarch did justice to the improvised supper which the butler placed before him as if by magic. But while eating, the king, whose back was turned toward the door, seemed to seek something, or rather some one.

In fact, Mademoiselle de Taverney, who enjoyed no privilege, as her position in the dauphiness's household was not yet fixed, had not entered the dining-room; and after her profound reverence in reply to the king's salutation, had returned to the dauphiness's apartment, that she might be ready, in case it should be required of her, as already it had been two or three times, to read to her Highness after she had retired to bed.

The dauphiness saw that the king was looking for the beautiful companion of his walk. "Monsieur de Coigny," said she to a young officer of the guards who was standing behind the king, "pray request Mademoiselle de Taverney to come up; with Madame de Noailles' permission, we will discard etiquette for this evening."

Monsieur de Coigny left the room, and almost immediately afterward returned, introducing Andrée, who, totally at a loss to comprehend the reason for such a succession of unusual favors, entered trembling.

"Seat yourself there, Mademoiselle," said the dauphiness, "beside Madame de Noailles."

Andrée mounted timidly on the raised seat; but she was so confused that she had the audacity to seat herself only about a foot distant from the lady of honor. She received, in consequence, such a terrific look that the poor child started back at least four feet, as if she had come in contact with a Leyden jar highly charged. The king looked at her and smiled.

"Ah!" said the duke to himself, "it is scarcely worth my while to meddle with the affair; the thing goes on by its own motion."

The king turned, and perceived the marshal, who was quite prepared to meet his look.

"Good day, Duke," said Louis; "do you agree well with the Duchesse de Noailles?"

"Sire," replied the marshal, "the duchess always does me the honor to treat me as a madcap."

"Oh! Were you also on the road to Chanteloup, Duke?"

"I, Sire? Faith, no! I am too grateful for the favors your Majesty has showered on my family."

The king did not expect this blow; he was prepared to banter, but he found himself anticipated.

"What favors have I showered, Duke?"

"Sire, your Majesty has given the command of your Light Horse to the Duc d'Aiguillon."

"Yes, it is true, Duke."

"And for that was needed all your Majesty's energy and skill. It is almost a *coup d'état.*"

The repast was now over; the king waited for a moment, and then rose from table. The conversation was taking an embarrassing turn, but Richelieu was determined not to let go his prey. Therefore when the king began to chat with Madame de Noailles, the dauphiness, and Mademoiselle de Taverney, Richelieu manœuvred so skilfully that he soon found himself in the full flow of a conversation which he directed according to his pleasure. "Sire," said he, "your Majesty knows that success emboldens."

"Do you say so for the purpose of informing us that you are bold, Duke?"

"Sire, it is for the purpose of requesting a new favor

from your Majesty, after the one the king has already deigned to grant. One of my best friends, an old servant of your Majesty, has a son in the gendarmes; the young man is highly deserving, but poor. He has received from an august princess the brevet title of captain, but he has not yet obtained his company."

"The princess, — my daughter?" asked the king, turning toward the dauphiness.

"Yes, Sire," said Richelieu; "and the father of this young man is called the Baron de Taverney."

"My father!" involuntarily exclaimed Andrée, "Philippe! Is it for Philippe, Monsieur le Duc, that you are asking for a company?" Then, ashamed of this breach of etiquette, she made a step backward, blushing, and clasping her hands with emotion.

The king turned to admire the blush which mantled the cheek of the lovely girl, and then glanced at Richelieu with a pleased look, which informed the courtier how agreeable his request had been.

"In truth," said the dauphiness, "he is a charming young man, and I had promised to make his fortune. How unfortunate princes are! When God gives them the best intentions, he deprives them of the memory and reasoning powers necessary to carry their intentions into effect. Ought I not to have known that this young man was poor, and that it was not enough to give him the epaulette without at the same time giving him the company?"

"Eh, Madame! how could your Highness have known that?"

"Oh, I knew it!" replied the dauphiness, quickly, with a gesture which recalled to Andrée's memory the modest but yet happy home of her childhood; "yes, I knew it, but I thought I had done everything necessary in giving a

step to Monsieur Philippe de Taverney. He is called Philippe, is he not, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, Madame."

The king looked round on these noble and ingenuous faces, and then rested his gaze on Richelieu, whose face was also brightened by a ray of generosity, borrowed doubtless from his august neighbor.

"Duke," said he, in a low voice, "I shall embroil myself with Luciennes." Then, addressing Andrée, he added, quickly, "Say that it will give you pleasure, Mademoiselle."

"Ah, Sire!" said Andrée, clasping her hands, "I request it as a boon from your Majesty."

"In that case, it is granted," said Louis. "You will choose a good company for this young man, Duke; I will furnish the necessary funds, if the charges are not already paid and the post vacant."

This good action gladdened all who were present. It procured the king a heavenly smile from Andrée, and Richelieu a warm expression of thanks from those beautiful lips, from which, in his youth, he would have asked for even more.

Several visitors arrived in succession, among whom was the Cardinal de Rohan, who since the installation of the dauphiness at Trianon had paid his court to her assiduously. But during the whole evening the king had kind looks and pleasant words only for Richelieu. He even commanded the marshal's attendance when, after bidding farewell to the dauphiness, he set out to return to his own Trianon. The old marshal followed the king, his heart bounding with joy.

While the king, accompanied by the duke and his two officers, set forth toward the dark alleys which lead from the palace, the dauphiness dismissed Andrée. "You will

be anxious to write this good news to Paris, Mademoiselle," said the princess; "you may retire."

Preceded by a footman, carrying a lantern, the young girl traversed the walk, of about a hundred paces in length, which separates Trianon from the offices. In advance of her, concealed by the thick foliage of the shrubbery, bounded a shadowy figure, which followed all her movements with sparkling eyes. It was Gilbert.

When Andrée had arrived at the entrance, and begun to ascend the stone steps, the valet left her and returned to the antechambers of Trianon.

Then Gilbert, gliding into the vestibule, reached the courtyard, and climbed by a small staircase as steep as a ladder into his attic, which was opposite Andrée's windows and was situated in a corner of the building. From this position he could see Andrée call an attendant of Madame de Noailles to assist her, as that lady had her apartments in the same corridor. But when the girl had entered the room, the window curtains fell like an impenetrable veil between the ardent eyes of the young man and the object of his wishes.

At the palace there now remained only Monsieur de Rohan, redoubling his gallant attentions to the dauphiness, who received them but coldly. The prelate, fearing at last to be indiscreet, inasmuch as the dauphin had already retired, took leave of her Royal Highness with the expression of the deepest and most tender respect.

As the cardinal was entering his carriage, a waiting-woman of the dauphiness approached, and almost leaned inside the door. "Here," said she; and she put into his hand a small paper parcel, carefully folded, the touch of which made the cardinal start.

"Here," he replied, hastily thrusting into the girl's hand a heavy purse, the contents of which would have been a

handsome salary. Then, without losing time, the cardinal ordered the coachman to drive to Paris, and to ask for new orders at the barrier. During the journey, in the darkness of the carriage he felt the paper, and kissed the contents like some intoxicated lover. At the barrier he cried, "Rue St. Claude." A short time afterward he crossed the mysterious courtyard, and once more found himself in the little salon occupied by Fritz, the silent usher.

Balsamo kept the cardinal waiting about a quarter of an hour. At last he appeared, and gave as a reason for his delay the lateness of the hour, which had prevented his expecting the arrival of visitors. In fact, it was now nearly eleven o'clock at night.

"That is true, Baron," said the cardinal; "and I must request you to excuse my unseasonable visit. But, you may remember, you told me one day that to be assured of certain secrets —"

"I must have a portion of the person's hair of whom we were speaking on that day," interrupted Balsamo, who had already spied the little paper which the unsuspecting prelate held carelessly in his hand.

"Precisely, Baron."

"And you have brought me this hair, Monseigneur? Very good."

"Here it is. Do you think it would be possible to return it to me again after the examination?"

"Unless fire should be necessary; in which case —"

"Of course, of course," said the cardinal. "However I can procure some more. Can I have a reply?"

"To-day?"

"You know I am impatient."

"I must first ascertain, Monseigneur;" and Balsamo took the packet of hair and hastily mounted to Lorenza's apartment.

"I shall now know," said he, on the way, "the secret of this monarchy; I shall know the hidden design of God!"

And from the other side of the wall, even before opening the secret door, he plunged Lorenza into the magnetic sleep. The young woman received him, therefore, with an affectionate embrace. Balsamo could scarcely extricate himself from her arms. It would be difficult to say which was the more grievous for the poor baron, — the reproaches of the beautiful Italian when she was awake, or her caresses when she slept. When he had succeeded in loosening the chain which her snowy arms formed around his neck, "My beloved Lorenza," said he, putting the paper in her hand, "can you tell me to whom this hair belongs?"

Lorenza took it and pressed it against her breast, and then to her forehead. Though her eyes were open, it was by her head and her breast that she saw in her sleep. "Oh!" said she, "it is an illustrious head from which this hair has been taken."

"Is it not? — and a happy head too? Speak."

"She may be happy."

"Look well, Lorenza."

"Yes, she may be happy; there is no shadow as yet upon her life."

"Yet she is married."

"Oh!" said Lorenza, with a sweet smile.

"Well! — what? What means my Lorenza?"

"She is married, dear Balsamo," added the young woman, "and yet —"

"And yet?"

"And yet —" Lorenza still smiled. "I too am married," she said.

"Certainly."

"And yet —"

Balsamo looked at Lorenza with profound astonishment. Although she was asleep, a blush of modesty covered her face.

"And yet?" repeated Balsamo. "Finish."

She again threw her arms around the neck of her lover, and hid her face on his breast. "And yet I am not married," she said.

"And that woman, that princess, that queen," cried Balsamo, "married though she is —?"

"That woman, that princess, that queen," repeated Lorenza, "is as pure and as chaste as I am, — purer and more chaste, even; for, unlike me, she does not love."

"Oh, fatality!" said Balsamo. "Thanks, Lorenza; I know all I wished to know."

He embraced her, put the hair carefully into his pocket, and then, cutting a lock off the Italian's black tresses, he burned it at the wax-light, and enclosed the ashes in the paper which had been wrapped round the hair of the dauphiness. Then he left the room; and while descending the stairs he awoke the young woman.

The prelate, agitated and impatient, was waiting and doubting.

"Well, Count?" said he.

"Well, Monseigneur, the oracle has said you may hope."

"It said so!" exclaimed the prince, transported with joy.

"Draw what conclusion you please, Monseigneur; the oracle has said that this woman does not love her husband."

"Oh!" said Monsieur de Rohan, with a thrill of joy.

"I was obliged to burn the hair to obtain the revelation by its essence. Here are the ashes, which I restore

to you most scrupulously, after having gathered them up as if each atom were worth a million."

"Thanks, Monsieur, a thousand thanks; I can never repay you."

"Do not speak of that, Monseigneur. I must recommend you, however, not to swallow these ashes in wine, as lovers sometimes do; it causes such a dangerous sympathy that your love would become incurable, while the lady's heart would cool toward you."

"Oh! I shall take care," said the prelate, almost terrified. "Adieu, Count, adieu!"

Twenty minutes afterward his Eminence's carriage crossed Monsieur de Richelieu's at the corner of the Rue des Petits Champs so suddenly that it was nearly upset in a deep trench which had been dug for the foundation of a new building.

The two noblemen recognized each other.

"Ha! Prince," said Richelieu, with a smile.

"Ha! Duke," replied Louis de Rohan, with his finger upon his lips.

And they disappeared in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU APPRECIATES NICOLE.

Monsieur de Richelieu drove straight to Monsieur de Taverney's modest hôtel in the Rue Coq-Héron.

Thanks to the privilege we possess, in common with the devil on two sticks, of entering every house, be it ever so carefully locked, we are aware, before Monsieur de Richelieu discovers it, that the baron is seated before the fireplace, his feet resting upon the immense andirons which support a smouldering log, and is lecturing Nicole, sometimes pausing to chuck her under the chin, in spite of the rebellious and scornful poutings of the young waiting-maid. But whether Nicole would have been satisfied with the caress without the sermon, or whether she would have preferred the sermon without the caress, we can give no satisfactory information.

The conversation between the master and the servant turned upon the very important point that at a certain hour of the evening Nicole never came when the bell was rung, — that she had always something to do in the garden or in the greenhouse ; and that everywhere but in these two places she neglected her service.

Nicole, turning backward and forward with a charming and voluptuous grace, replied : " So much the worse ! I am dying with weariness here ; you promised I should go to Trianon with Mademoiselle."

It was thereupon that the baron thought it proper in charity to pat her cheeks and chuck her chin, no doubt to

distract her thoughts from dwelling on so unpleasant a subject; but Nicole continued in the same vein, and refusing all consolation, deplored her unhappy lot. "Yes," she sighed, "I am shut up within four horrible walls, I have no company, I have no air; while I had the prospect of a pleasant and fortunate future before me."

"What prospect?" said the baron.

"Trianon," replied Nicole, — "Trianon, where I should have seen the world; where I should have looked about me; where I should have been looked at."

"Oh! oh! my little Nicole," said the baron.

"Well, Monsieur, I am a woman, and as well worth looking at as another, I suppose?"

"*Cordieu!* how she talks," said the baron to himself. "What fire, what ambition! Oh, if I were young, and if I were rich!" and he could not help casting a look of admiration at so much youth and beauty. Nicole was thoughtful, and at times impatient.

"Come, Monsieur," said she, "will you retire to bed, that I may go to mine?"

"One word more, Nicole."

A sudden ringing of the street-bell made Taverney start and Nicole jump.

"Who can be coming," said the baron, "at half-past eleven o'clock at night? Go, child, and see."

Nicole hastened to open the door, asked the name of the visitor, and left the street-door half open. Through this lucky opening a shadow, which had apparently emerged from the court-yard, glided out, not without making noise enough to attract the attention of the marshal, — for it was he, — who turned and saw the flight. Nicole preceded him, candle in hand, with a beaming look.

"Oh, oh!" said the marshal, smiling, and following

her into the room, "this old rogue of a Taverney spoke to me only of his daughter."

The duke was one of those men who do not require a second glance to see, and see completely. The shadowy figure which he had observed escaping made him think of Nicole, and Nicole of the shadow. When he saw her pretty face he guessed what errand the shadow had come upon; and judging from her saucy and laughing eye, her white teeth and small waist, he had nothing more to learn concerning her character and tastes.

At the door of the salon Nicole, not without a palpitation of the heart, announced, "Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu."

This name was destined to cause a sensation that evening. It produced such an effect upon the baron that he rose from his armchair and walked straight to the door, not being able to believe the evidence of his ears. But before he reached the door he perceived Monsieur de Richelieu in the shadow of the corridor.

"The duke!" he stammered.

"Yes, my dear friend, the duke himself," replied Richelieu, in his most friendly manner. "Oh! that surprises you, after your visit the other day? Well, nevertheless, nothing can be more real. In the mean time your hand, if you please."

"Monsieur le Duc, you overwhelm me."

"You have lost your wits, my dear friend," said the old marshal, giving his hat and cane to Nicole, and seating himself comfortably in an armchair. "You are getting rusty; you dote. You seem no longer to know the world!"

"But yet, Duke," replied Taverney, much agitated, "it seems to me that the reception you gave me the other day was so significant that I could not mistake its character."

"Hark ye, my old friend," answered Richelieu, "the other day you behaved like a school-boy, and I like a pedant. Between us there was but little difference. You are going to speak, — I will save you the trouble; you might say foolish things to me, and I might reply in the same vein. Let us leave the other day aside, therefore, and come direct to the present time. Do you know what I have come for this evening?"

"No, certainly."

"I have come to bring you the company which you asked of me for your son the other day, and which the king has granted. What the devil, can't you understand the difference? The day before yesterday I was a quasi-minister, and to ask a favor was an injustice; but to-day, when I am simply Richelieu, and have refused the portfolio, it would be absurd not to ask. I have therefore asked and obtained, and I now bring it to you."

"Duke, can this be true? And is this kindness on your part —"

"It is the natural consequence of my duty as your friend. The minister refused; Richelieu asks and gives."

"Ah, Duke, you enchant me! You are then really my friend?"

"I should say so!"

"But the king, — the king, who confers such a favor on me —"

"The king scarcely knows what he has done; or perhaps I am mistaken, and he knows very well."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that his Majesty has, no doubt, some motive for provoking Madame Dubarry just now; and you owe this favor, which he bestows upon you, more to that motive than to my influence."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it, for I am aiding and abetting. You know it is on account of that creature that I refused the portfolio?"

"I was told so, but —"

"But you did not believe it. Come, say it frankly!"

"Well, I confess that —"

"You always thought me not likely to be troubled by many scruples of conscience, — is that it?"

"At least, I thought you without prejudices."

"My friend, I am getting old, and I no longer care for pretty faces, except when they can be useful to me. And besides, I have some other plans. But to return to your son; he is a splendid fellow!"

"But on bad terms with that Dubarry who was at your house when I had the folly to present myself."

"I am aware of it, and that is why I am not a minister."

"Oh! you refused the portfolio in order not to displease my son?"

"If I told you so, you would not believe me. No, that is not the reason. I refused it because the requirements of the Dubarrys, which began with the exclusion of your son, would have ended in enormities of all kinds."

"Then you have quarrelled with those creatures?"

"Yes, and no. They fear me, — I despise them; it is tit for tat."

"It is heroic, but imprudent."

"Why?"

"The countess has still some power."

"Pooh!" said Richelieu.

"How you say that!"

"I say it like a man who perceives the weak point of a situation, and who, if necessary, would place the miner in a good position to blow up the whole concern."

"I see the true state of the case: you do my son a favor partly to vex the Dubarrys."

"Principally for that reason; and your perspicacity is not at fault. Your son serves me as a grenade; I shall cause an explosion by his means. But, by the way, Baron, have you not also a daughter?"

"Yes."

"Young?"

"Sixteen years."

"Beautiful?"

"As Venus."

"Who lives at Trianon?"

"Ah! then you know her?"

"I have spent the evening in her company, and have conversed about her for a full hour with the king."

"With the king?" cried Taverney, his cheeks in a flame. "The king has spoken of my daughter, — of Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney?"

"Whom he devours with his eyes, — yes, my dear fellow."

"Ah! really?"

"Do I annoy you in telling you this?"

"Me? No, certainly not. The king honors me by looking at my daughter; but — the king —"

"Is immoral; is that what you were going to say?"

"God forbid that I should speak evil of his majesty! He has a right to adopt whatever morals he chooses."

"Well, what does this astonishment mean, then? Do you pretend to say that Mademoiselle Andrée is not an accomplished beauty, and that therefore the king may not have looked upon her with admiration?"

Taverney did not reply; he only shrugged his shoulders and fell into a revery, during which the unrelenting, inquisitorial eye of the Duc de Richelieu was still fixed upon him.

"Well, I know what you would say, if, instead of thinking to yourself, you would speak aloud," continued the old marshal, moving his chair nearer the baron's. "You would say that the king is accustomed to bad society, that he mixes with low company, and that therefore he is not likely to admire this noble girl, so modest in her demeanor and so pure and lofty in her ideas, and is not capable of appreciating the treasures of her grace and beauty."

"Certainly, you are a great man, Duke; you have read my thoughts exactly," said Taverney.

"But confess, Baron," continued Richelieu, "that our master should no longer force us gentlemen, peers and companions of the king of France, to kiss the vile, open hand of a creature like Dubarry. It is time that he should restore us to our proper position. After having sunk from La Chateauroux, who was a marquise and of stuff to make duchesses, to La Pompadour, who was the daughter and the wife of a farmer of the public revenues, and from La Pompadour to the Dubarry, who calls herself simply Jeanneton, may he not fall still farther, and plunge us into the lowest pitch of degradation? It is humiliating for us, Baron, who wear a coronet on our caps, to bow the head before such worthless creatures."

"Oh! you speak only the truth," said Taverney. "How evident is it that the court is deserted on account of these new fashions!"

"No queen, no ladies; no ladies, no courtiers. The king takes up a grisette, and the people are upon the throne, represented by Mademoiselle Jeanne Vaubernier, a sempstress of Paris."

"It is so, and yet—"

"You see then, Baron," interrupted the marshal, "what

a noble career is open for a woman of mind who should reign at this time over France."

"Without doubt," said Taverney, whose heart was beating fast; "but unluckily the place is occupied."

"For a woman," continued the marshal, "who would have the boldness of these creatures without their vice, and who would direct her views and calculations to a loftier aim; for a woman who would advance her fortune so high that she should be talked of when the monarchy itself should no longer exist. Do you know if your daughter has intellect, Baron?"

"Lofty intellect, and above all, good sense."

"She is very lovely."

"Is she not?"

"Her beauty is of that soft and charming character which pleases men so much, while her whole being is stamped with that air of candor and virgin purity which imposes respect even upon women. You must take great care of that treasure, my old friend."

"You speak of her with such fire —"

"I! I am madly in love with her, and would marry her to-morrow, were I twenty, instead of seventy-four years of age! But is she comfortably placed? Has she the luxury which befits such a lovely flower? Only think, Baron! this evening she returned alone to her apartments, without waiting-women or lackey. An attendant of the dauphin carried a lantern before her! That looks as if she were a servant rather than a lady of rank."

"What can I do, Duke? You know I am not rich."

"Rich or not, your daughter must at least have a waiting-maid."

Taverney sighed. "I know very well," said he, "that she wants one, or at least that she ought to have one."

"Well, have you none?"

The baron did not reply.

"Who is that pretty girl you had here just now?" continued Richelieu. "A fine, spirited-looking girl, i' faith."

"Yes, but — I — I cannot send her to Trianon."

"Why not, Baron? On the contrary, she seems to me perfectly suited for the post; she would make a capital attendant."

"You did not look at her face then, Duke?"

"I, — I did nothing else!"

"You looked at her, and did not remark her strange resemblance?"

"To whom?"

"To — guess. Come hither, Nicole."

Nicole advanced; like a true waiting-woman, she had been listening at the door. The duke took her by both hands and looked her steadily in the face; but the impertinent gaze of this great nobleman and debauchee did not alarm or embarrass her for a moment.

"Yes," said he, "it is true; there is a resemblance."

"You know to whom, and you see therefore that it is impossible to expose the fortunes of our house to such an awkward trick of fate. Is it a pleasant thing that this little minx of a Nicole resembles the most illustrious lady in France?"

"Oh, ho!" replied Nicole, sharply, and disengaging herself from the marshal's grasp, the better to reply to Monsieur de Taverney, "is it so certain that this little minx resembles this illustrious lady so exactly? Has the illustrious lady the low shoulder, the quick eye, the round ankle, and the plump arm of the little minx?"

Nicole was crimson with rage, and therefore ravishingly beautiful.

The duke once more took her pretty hands in his, and with a look full of caresses and promises : " Baron," said he, " Nicole has certainly not her equal at court, — at least in my opinion. As for the illustrious lady to whom she has, I confess, a slight resemblance, we shall know how to spare her self-love. You have fair hair of a lovely shade, Mademoiselle Nicole ; you have eyebrows and nose of a most imperial form : well, in one quarter of an hour employed before the mirror, these imperfections, since the baron thinks them such, will disappear. Nicole, my child, would you like to be at Trianon ? "

" Oh ! " said Nicole, and her whole soul, full of longing, was expressed in this monosyllable.

" You shall go to Trianon, then, my dear, and without prejudicing in any way the fortunes of others. Baron, one word more."

" Speak, my dear Duke."

" Go, my pretty child," said Richelieu, " and leave us alone a moment."

Nicole retired. The duke approached the baron. " I press you the more to send your daughter a waiting-maid," said he, " because it will please the king. His Majesty does not like poverty, and pretty faces do not frighten him. Let me alone ; I understand what I am about."

" Nicole shall go to Trianon, if you think it will please the king," replied the baron, with a meaning smile.

" Then, if you will allow me, I will take her with me."

"But still, her resemblance to the dauphiness ! We must think of that, Duke."

" I have thought of it. This resemblance will disappear in a quarter of an hour under Rafté's hands, I will answer for it. Write a note to your daughter to tell her of what importance it is that she should have a maid, and that this maid should be Nicole."

"You think it important that it should be Nicole?"

"I do."

"And that no other than Nicole would do?"

"Upon my honor I think so."

"Then I will write immediately;" and the baron sat down and wrote a letter, which he handed to Richelieu.

"And the instructions, Duke?"

"I will give them to Nicole. Is she intelligent?"

The baron smiled.

"Then you confide her to me, do you not?" said Richelieu.

"That is your affair, Duke. You asked me for her; I give her to you: make of her what you like."

"Mademoiselle, come with me," said the duke, rising, and calling into the corridor, "and that quickly."

Nicole did not wait to be told twice. Without asking the baron for his consent, she made up a packet of clothes in five minutes, and light as a bird, she flew downstairs and took her place beside the coachman.

Richelieu took leave of his friend, who repeated his thanks for the service he had rendered Philippe. Of Andrée not a word was said.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE TRANSFORMATION.

Nicole was overjoyed. To leave Taverney for Paris was not so great a triumph as to leave Paris for Trianon. She was so gracious with Monsieur de Richelieu's coachman that the next morning the reputation of the new waiting-maid was established throughout all the coach-houses and antechambers, in any degree aristocratic, of Paris and Versailles.

When they arrived at the Hôtel de Hanover, Monsieur de Richelieu took the young girl by the hand and led her to the first story, where Monsieur Rafté was awaiting his arrival, and writing a multitude of letters on his master's account.

Among the various acquirements of the marshal, war occupied the foremost rank, and Rafté had become, at least in theory, such a skilful strategist that Polybius and the Chevalier de Folard, if they had lived at that period, would have esteemed themselves fortunate could they have perused the pamphlets on fortifications and manœuvring, of which Rafté wrote one every week. Monsieur Rafté was busy revising the plan of a war against the English in the Mediterranean when the marshal entered and said, "Rafté, look at this child, will you?"

Rafté looked.

"Very pretty, Monseigneur," said he, with a most significant movement of the lips.

"Yes, but the likeness, Rafté? It is of the likeness I speak."

"Eh! it is true. Ah! the devil!"

"You see it, do you not?"

"It is extraordinary; it will either make or mar her fortune."

"It will ruin her at once. But we will provide against it. You observe she has fair hair, Rafté; but that will not signify much, will it?"

"It will only be necessary to make it black, Monseigneur," replied Rafté, who had acquired the habit of completing his master's thoughts, and sometimes even of thinking entirely for him.

"Come to my dressing-table, child," said the marshal. "This gentleman, who is a very clever man, will make you the handsomest and the least easily recognized waiting-maid in France."

In fact, ten minutes afterward, with the assistance of a composition which the marshal used every week to dye the white hairs black beneath his wig, — a piece of coquetry which he often affected to confess by the bedside of some of his acquaintances, — Rafté had dyed the beautiful auburn hair of Nicole a splendid jet black. Then he passed the end of a pin, blackened in the flame of a candle, over her thick, fair eyebrows, and by this means gave such a fantastic look to her joyous countenance, such an ardent and even sombre fire to her bright, clear eyes, that one would have said she was some fairy bursting by the power of an incantation from the magic prison in which her enchanter had held her confined.

"Now, my sweet child," said Richelieu, after having handed a mirror to the astonished Nicole, "see how charming you are, and how little like the Nicole you were just now. You have no longer ruin to fear, but a fortune to make."

"Oh, Monseigneur!" exclaimed the young girl.

"Yes, and for that purpose it is only necessary that we understand each other."

Nicole blushed, and looked down; the cunning one expected, no doubt, words such as Richelieu knew so well how to say.

The duke perceived this, and to cut short all misunderstanding said: "Sit down in this armchair beside Monsieur Rafté, my dear child. Open your ears wide, and listen to me. Oh! do not let Monsieur Rafté's presence embarrass you; do not be afraid; he will, on the contrary, give us his advice. You are listening, are you not?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," stammered Nicole, ashamed at having thus been led away by her vanity.

The conversation between Monsieur de Richelieu, Monsieur Rafté, and Nicole lasted more than an hour, after which the marshal sent the young girl to sleep with the other waiting-women in the hôtel.

Rafté returned to his military pamphlet, and Richelieu retired to bed, after having looked over the different letters which conveyed to him intelligence of all the acts of the provincial parliaments against Monsieur d'Aiguillon and the Dubarry clique.

Early the next day one of his carriages, without his coat-of-arms, conducted Nicole to Trianon, set her down at the gate with her little packet, and immediately disappeared. Nicole, with head erect, mind at ease, and hope dancing in her eyes, after having made the necessary inquiries, knocked at the door of the offices.

It was ten o'clock in the morning. Andrée, already up and dressed, was writing to her father to inform him of the happy event of the preceding day, of which Monsieur de Richelieu, as we have already seen, had conveyed the intelligence. Our readers will not have forgotten that a flight of stone steps led from the garden to the little

chapel of Trianon; that on the landing-place of this chapel a staircase branched off toward the right to the first story, which contained the apartments of the ladies-in-waiting, which apartments opened off a long corridor, like an alley, looking upon the garden.

Andrée's chamber was the first upon the left hand in this corridor. It was tolerably large, well-lighted by windows looking upon the stable court, and was entered through an antechamber, on each side of which was a small room. This apartment, however insufficient, if one considers the ordinary establishments pertaining to the officers of a brilliant court, was yet a charming retreat, very habitable, and very cheerful as an asylum from the noise and bustle of the palace. Thither an ambitious soul could fly to devour the affronts or the mistakes of the day, and there a humble and melancholy spirit could repose in silence and in solitude, apart from the grandeur of the gay world around.

In fact, the stone steps once ascended and the chapel passed, there no longer existed either superiority, duty, or display. There reigned the calm of a convent, and the personal liberty of prison life. The slave of the palace was a monarch when she had crossed the threshold of her modest dwelling. A gentle yet lofty soul such as Andrée's found consolation in this reflection; not that she flew hither to repose after the fatigues of a disappointed ambition or of unsatisfied longings, but she felt that she could think more at her ease in the narrow bounds of her chamber than in the rich salons of Trianon, or in those marble halls which her feet trod with a timidity amounting almost to terror.

From this sequestered nook, where the young girl felt herself so well and so appropriately placed, she could look without emotion on all the splendor which, during the

day, had dazzled her eyes. Surrounded by her flowers, her harpsichord, and her German books, — such sweet companions to those who read with the heart, — Andrée defied fate to inflict on her a single grief, or to deprive her of a single joy.

"Here," said she, when in the evening, after her duties were over, she returned to throw around her shoulders her dressing-gown with its wide folds, and to breathe with all her soul, as with all her lungs, — "here I possess nearly everything I can hope to possess till my death. I may one day perhaps be richer, but I can never be poorer than I now am. There will always be flowers, music, and a consoling page to cheer the poor recluse."

Andrée had obtained permission to breakfast in her own apartment when she felt inclined. This was a precious boon to her, for she could thus remain in her own domicile until twelve o'clock, unless the dauphiness should command her attendance for some morning reading or some early walk. Thus free, in fine weather she set out every morning with a book in her hand, and traversed alone the extensive woods which lie between Versailles and Trianon; then, after a walk of two hours, during which she gave full play to meditation and revery, she returned to breakfast, often without having seen either nobleman or servant, man or livery.

When the heat began to pierce through the thick foliage Andrée had her little chamber, fresh and cool with the double current of air from the door and the window. A small sofa covered with Indian silk, four chairs to match, a simple yet elegant bed with a circular top, from which the curtains of the same material as the covering of the furniture fell in deep folds, two china vases placed upon the mantelpiece, and a square table with brass feet, furnished and adorned her little world, whose narrow

confines bounded all her hopes and limited all her wishes.

Andrée was seated in her apartment, as we have said, and busily engaged in writing to her father, when a modest knock at the door of the corridor attracted her attention. She raised her head on seeing the door open, and uttered a slight cry of astonishment when the radiant face of Nicole appeared, entering from the little antechamber.

CHAPTER L.

HOW PLEASURE TO SOME IS DESPAIR TO OTHERS.

"Good-day, Mademoiselle; it is I," said Nicole, with a joyous reverence, which nevertheless, from the young girl's knowledge of her mistress's character, was not unmixed with anxiety.

"You! And how do you happen to be here?" replied Andrée, putting down her pen, the better to follow the conversation which was thus opened.

"Mademoiselle had forgotten me, so I came —"

"But if I forgot you, Mademoiselle, it was because I had my reasons for so doing. Who gave you permission to come?"

"Monsieur the baron, of course, Mademoiselle," said Nicole, smoothing with a very dissatisfied air the handsome black eyebrows which she owed to the generosity of Monsieur Rafté.

"My father requires your services in Paris, and I do not require you here at all. You may return, child."

"Oh! then Mademoiselle does not care, — I thought Mademoiselle had been more pleased with me. It is well worth while loving," added Nicole, philosophically, "to meet with such a return at last;" and she did her utmost to bring a tear to her beautiful eyes.

There was enough of heart and feeling in this reproach to excite Andrée's compassion. "My child," said she, "I have attendance here already, and I cannot permit myself

unnecessarily to increase the household of the dauphiness by another mouth."

"Oh, as if this mouth was so large!" said Nicole, with a charming smile.

"No matter, Nicole, your presence here is impossible."

"On account of that resemblance?" said the young girl. "Then you have not looked at my face, Mademoiselle."

"In fact you seem changed."

"I think so! A fine gentleman, he who got the promotion for Monsieur Philippe, came to us yesterday, and as he saw the baron quite melancholy at your being here without a waiting-maid, he told him that nothing was easier than to change me from fair to dark. He brought me with him, dressed me as you see, and here I am."

Andrée smiled. "You must love me very much," said she, "since you are determined at all risks to shut yourself up in Trianon, where I am almost a prisoner."

Nicole cast a rapid but intelligent glance round the room. "The chamber is not very gay," said she, "but you are not always in it?"

"I? Of course not," replied Andrée; "but you?"

"Well, I?"

"You, who will never enter the salons of Madame the Dauphiness, — you, who will have neither the resource of the theatre, nor the walk, nor the evening circle, but will always remain here; you will die of weariness."

"Oh!" said Nicole, "there is always some little window or other; one can surely see some little glimpse of the gay world without, were it only through the chinks of the door. If one can see, one can also be seen. That is all I require; so do not be uneasy on my account."

"I repeat, Nicole, that I cannot receive you without express orders from my father."

"Is that your settled determination?"

"It is."

Nicole drew the Baron de Taverney's letter from her bosom. "There," said she, "since my entreaties and my devotion to you have had no effect, let us see if the order contained in this will have more power."

Andrée read the letter, which was in the following terms:—

I am aware, and indeed it is already remarked, my dear Andrée, that you do not occupy the position at Trianon which your rank imperatively requires. You ought to have two maids and a valet, as I ought to have twenty thousand francs per annum; but as I am content with one thousand francs, imitate my example, and content yourself with Nicole, who, though alone, is sufficient for all the domestic service necessary to you.

Nicole is quick, intelligent, and devoted to you, and will readily adopt the tone and manners of the place. Your chief care indeed will be not to stimulate her, but to repress her willingness to serve. Keep her, then; and do not imagine that I am making any sacrifice in depriving myself of her services. In case you should think so, remember that his Majesty, who had the goodness to think of us, remarked on seeing you (this was confided to me by a good friend) that you required a little more attention to your toilet and general appearance. Think of this; it is of great importance.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

This letter threw Andrée into a state of grief and perplexity. She was then to be haunted, even in her prosperity, by the remembrance of that poverty which she alone did not feel to be a fault, while all around seemed to consider it as a crime.

Her first impulse was to break her pen indignantly, to tear the letter she had begun, and to reply to her father's epistle by some lofty tirade expressive of philosophical self-denial, which Philippe would have approved of with

all his heart. But she imagined she saw the baron's satirical smile on reading this masterpiece, and her resolution vanished. She merely replied to the baron's order, therefore, by a paragraph annexed to the news of Trianon which she had already written to him according to his request.

"My father," she added, "Nicole has this moment arrived, and I receive her, since you wish it; but what you have written on this subject has vexed me. Shall I be less ridiculous with this village girl as waiting-maid than when I was alone among those opulent courtiers? Nicole will be unhappy at seeing me humiliated. She will be discontented; for servants feel proud or humiliated in proportion to the wealth or poverty of their masters. As to his Majesty's remark, my father, permit me to tell you that the king has too much good sense to be displeased at my incapacity to play the grand lady; and besides, his Majesty has too much heart to have noticed or criticised my poverty without transforming it into a wealth to which your name and services would have seemed a legitimate claim in the eyes of all."

This was Andrée's reply, and it must be confessed that her ingenuous innocence, her noble pride, had an easy triumph over the cunning and corruption of her tempters.

Andrée said no more respecting Nicole. She agreed to her remaining, so that the latter, joyous and animated, she well knew why, at once prepared a little bed in the cabinet on the right of the antechamber, and made herself as small, as aerial, and as exquisite as possible, in order not to inconvenience her mistress by her presence in this modest retreat. One would have thought she wished to imitate the rose-leaf which the Persian sages let fall upon a vase filled with water, to show that something could be added without causing the water to overflow.

Andrée set out for Trianon about one o'clock. She had never been more quickly or more gracefully attired. Nicole had surpassed herself; she had been all politeness, attention, and zeal, — nothing had been wanting in her services.

When Mademoiselle de Taverney had gone, Nicole considered herself mistress of the domicile, and instituted a thorough examination of it. Everything was scrutinized, from the letters to the smallest knick-knack on the toilet-table, from the mantelpiece to the most secret corners of the closets. Then she looked out of the windows to take a survey of the neighborhood.

Below her was a large courtyard, in which several ostlers were dressing and currying the splendid horses of the dauphiness. Ostlers! pshaw! Nicole turned away her head.

On the right was a row of windows on the same story as those of Andrée's apartment. Several heads appeared at these windows, apparently those of chambermaids and floor-scrubbers. Nicole disdainfully proceeded in her examination.

On the opposite side, in a large apartment, some music-teachers were drilling a class of choristers and instrumentalists for the mass of Saint Louis. Without ceasing her dusting operations, Nicole began to sing after her own fashion, thus distracting the attention of the masters, and causing the choristers to sing out of tune.

But this pastime could not long satisfy Mademoiselle Nicole's ambition. When the masters and the singers had quarrelled, and been mystified sufficiently, the little waiting-maid proceeded to the inspection of the higher story. All the windows were closed, and moreover they were only attics, so Nicole continued her dusting. But a moment afterward, one of these attic windows was opened

without her being able to discover by what mechanism, for no one appeared. Some one, however, must have opened that window; this some one had seen Nicole, and had not remained to look at her; it was some one very impertinent, — at least, such was Nicole's opinion. But she, who examined everything so conscientiously, wished to examine the features of this impertinent; and she therefore returned every moment from her different avocations to the window, to give a glance at this attic, — that is, at this open eye from which the eyeball was so obstinately absent. Once she imagined that the person fled as she approached; but this was incredible, and she did not believe it. Another time she was almost sure of it, having seen the back of the fugitive, — surprised, no doubt, by a prompter return than he had anticipated. Then Nicole had recourse to stratagem; she concealed herself behind the curtain, leaving the window wide open, to drown all suspicion.

She waited a long time, but at last a head of black hair made its appearance; then came two timid hands, which supported, buttress-like, a body bending over cautiously; and finally, a face showed itself distinctly at the window. Nicole almost fell, and grasped the curtain so tightly, in her surprise, that it shook from top to bottom.

It was Monsieur Gilbert's face which was looking at her from this lofty attic. But the moment Gilbert saw the curtain move, he comprehended the trick, and did not again appear; furthermore, the attic window was closed.

No doubt Gilbert had seen Nicole; he had been astonished, and had wished to convince himself of the presence of his enemy, and when he found himself discovered instead, he had fled in agitation and in anger. At least, Nicole interpreted the scene thus, and she was right, for this was the exact state of the case.

In fact, Gilbert would rather have seen the devil than Nicole. The arrival of this spy caused him a thousand terrors. He had an old leaven of jealousy against her, for she knew his secret of the garden in the Rue Coq-Héron.

Gilbert had fled in agitation, and not in agitation alone, but also in anger, and biting his nails with rage. "Of what use now is my foolish discovery, of which I was so proud?" said he to himself. "Even if Nicole had a lover in Paris, the evil is done, and she will not be sent away from here on that account; but if she tells what I did in the Rue Coq-Héron I shall be dismissed from Trianon. It is not I who govern Nicole, — it is she who governs me. Oh, fury!"

And Gilbert's inordinate self-love, serving as a stimulant to his hatred, made his blood boil with frightful violence. It seemed to him that Nicole, in entering that apartment, had chased from it, with a diabolical smile, all the happy dreams which he from his garret had sent thither every day with his vows, his ardent love, and his flowers. Had Gilbert been too much occupied to think of Nicole before, or had he banished the subject from his thoughts on account of the terror with which it inspired him? We cannot determine; but this we know, at least, — that Nicole's appearance was a most disagreeable surprise for him.

Gilbert saw plainly that sooner or later war would be declared between them; but as he was prudent and politic, he did not wish the war to begin until he felt himself strong enough to make it energetic and effective. With this intention he determined to counterfeit death until chance should present him a favorable opportunity of reviving, — or until Nicole, from weakness or necessity, should venture on some step which would deprive her of

her present vantage-ground. Therefore, exercising the greatest vigilance where Andrée was concerned, but at the same time circumspect and careful, he continued to make himself acquainted with the state of affairs in the first apartment of the corridor, without Nicole ever having once met him in the gardens.

Unluckily for Nicole she was not irreproachable, and even had she been so at that time, there was always one stumbling-block in the past over which she could be made to fall.

At the end of a week's ceaseless watching, — morning, noon, and night, — Gilbert at last saw through the bars of his window a plume, which he fancied he recognized. This plume was a source of constant agitation to Nicole, for it belonged to Monsieur Beausire, who, following the rest of the court, had emigrated from Paris to Trianon.

For a long time Nicole was cruel; for a long time she left Monsieur Beausire to shiver in the cold and melt in the sun; and her prudence drove Gilbert to despair. But one fine morning, when Monsieur Beausire had doubtless overleaped the barrier of mimic eloquence, and found an opportunity of bringing persuasive words to his aid, Nicole profited by Andrée's absence to descend to the court-yard and join Monsieur Beausire, who was assisting his friend, the superintendent of the stables, to train a small Irish horse.

From the court they passed into the garden, and from thence into the shady avenue which leads to Versailles. Gilbert followed the amorous couple with the ferocious joy of a tiger who scents his prey. He counted their steps, their sighs, and learned by heart all he heard of their conversation. It may be presumed that the result pleased him, for the next day, freed from all embarrassment, he displayed himself openly at his attic window,

humming a song and looking quite at ease, and so far from fearing to be seen by Nicole, that, on the contrary, he seemed to brave her look.

Nicole was mending an embroidered silken mitten belonging to her mistress; she heard the song, raised her head, and saw Gilbert. The first evidence she gave of his presence was a contemptuous pouting, which gave place to a bitter expression, indicating the intensest hostility. But Gilbert sustained this look with such a singular smile, and there was such provoking intelligence in his air and in his manner of singing, that Nicole looked down and blushed.

"She understands me," thought Gilbert; "that is all I wished." Then he began again the same course of conduct, and Nicole trembled. At length she began to wish for an interview with him, in order to free her heart from the load with which the satirical manner of the young gardener had burdened it.

Gilbert noticed that she sought him. He could not misunderstand the short dry coughs which sounded near the window whenever Nicole knew him to be in his attic, nor the goings and comings of the young girl in the corridor when she supposed he might be ascending or descending the stairs. For a short time he was very proud of this triumph, which he attributed entirely to his strength of character and wise precautions. Nicole watched him so well that once she spied him as he mounted to his attic. She called him, but he did not reply.

Prompted either by curiosity or fear, Nicole went still farther. One evening she took off her pretty, high-heeled slippers, — a present from Andrée, — and with a trembling and hurried step she ventured into the attic, at the end of which she saw Gilbert's door. There was still sufficient daylight to enable Gilbert, aware of Nicole's approach, to

see her distinctly through the joining, or rather through the crevices, of the panels. She knocked at the door, knowing well that he was in his room; but Gilbert did not reply.

It was, nevertheless, a dangerous temptation for him. He could at his ease humble her who thus came to entreat his pardon; and prompted by this thought, he had already raised his hand to draw the bolt which, with his habitual precaution and vigilance, he had fastened, to avoid surprise.

"But no," thought he, "no. She is all calculation; it is from fear or interest alone that she comes to seek me. She therefore hopes to gain something by her visit; but if so, what may I not lose?" And with this reasoning he let his hand fall again by his side.

Nicole, after having knocked at the door two or three times, retired frowning. Gilbert therefore kept all his advantage, and Nicole had to redouble her cunning in order not to lose hers entirely. At last all these projects and counter-projects reduced themselves to this dialogue, which took place between the belligerent parties one evening at the chapel door, where chance had brought them together.

"Ha! good evening, Monsieur Gilbert; you are here then, are you?"

"Oh! good evening, Mademoiselle Nicole; you are at Trianon?"

"As you see, — waiting-maid to Mademoiselle."

"And I am assistant-gardener."

Then Nicole made a graceful reverence to Gilbert, who returned her a most courtly bow, and they separated. Gilbert ascended to his attic as if he had been on his way thither, and Nicole left the offices and proceeded on her errand; but Gilbert glided down again stealthily, and

followed Nicole, supposing that she was going to meet Monsieur Beausire.

A man was indeed waiting for her beneath the shadows of the alley. Nicole approached him. It was too dark for Gilbert to recognize any one; and the absence of the plume puzzled him so much that he let Nicole return to her domicile, and followed the man as far as the gate of Trianon. It was not Monsieur Beausire, but a man of a certain age, or rather certainly aged, with a distinguished air and a brisk gait, notwithstanding his advanced years. When he approached, Gilbert, who carried his assurance so far as almost to brush past him, recognized Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu.

"*Peste!*" said Gilbert; "first an officer, now a marshal of France! Mademoiselle Nicole is promoted."

CHAPTER LI.

THE PARLIAMENTS.

While all these minor intrigues, hatched and brought to light beneath the linden-trees and among the alleys of Trianon, constituted a sufficiently animated existence for the insects of this little world, the great intrigues of the town, like threatening tempests, spread their vast wings over the palace of Themis, as Monsieur Jean Dubarry wrote in mythological parlance to his sister.

The parliaments — those degenerate remains of the ancient French opposition — had taken breath beneath the capricious government of Louis XV.; but since their protector, Monsieur de Choiseul, had fallen, they felt the approach of danger, and they prepared to meet it by measures as energetic as circumstances would permit.

Every great general commotion is kindled at first by some personal quarrel, as the pitched battles of armies are begun by skirmishes of outposts. Since Monsieur de la Chalotais in attacking Monsieur d'Aiguillon had personified the struggle of the third estate with the feudal lords, the public mind had seized on the question, and would not permit it to be deferred or displaced.

Now the king — whom the parliament of Brittany and those of all France had deluged with a flood of petitions, more or less submissive and filial — the king, thanks to Madame Dubarry, had just given his countenance to the feudal party, against the party of the people, by nominating Monsieur d'Aiguillon to the command of his Light

Horse. Monsieur Jean Dubarry had described it very correctly : it was a smart blow in the face of the dear and trusty counsellors sitting in high court of parliament.

"How would the blow be taken?" Town and court asked itself this question every morning at sunrise; but members of parliament are clever people, and where others are much embarrassed, they see clearly. They began with agreeing among themselves as to the application and the result of this blow, and then, when it had been clearly ascertained that the blow had been given and received, they adopted the following resolution :—

"The court of parliament will deliberate upon the conduct of the ex-governor of Brittany, and give its opinion thereon."

But the king parried the blow by sending a message to the peers and princes, forbidding them to repair to the palace, or be present at any deliberation which might take place concerning Monsieur d'Aiguillon. They obeyed to the letter.

Then the parliament, determined to do its business itself, passed a decree, in which, after declaring that the Duc d'Aiguillon was seriously inculpated and tainted with suspicion, even on matters which touched his honor, it proclaimed that that peer was suspended from the functions of the peerage until, by a judgment given in the court of peers, with the forms and solemnities prescribed by the laws and customs of the kingdom, — "the place of which nothing can supply," — he had fully cleared himself from the accusations and suspicions now resting on his honor.

But such a decree, passed merely in the court of parliament before those interested, and inscribed in their reports, was nothing; public notoriety was wanting, and, above all, that uproar which song alone ventures to raise in France, and which makes song the sovereign controller

of events and rulers. This decree of parliament must be heightened and strengthened by the power of song.

Paris desired nothing better than to take part in this commotion. Little disposed to view either court or parliament with favor, Paris in its ceaseless movement was waiting for some good subject for a laugh, as a transition from all the causes for tears which had been furnished it for a hundred years.

The decree was therefore properly and duly passed, and the parliament appointed commissioners, who were to have it printed under their own eyes. Ten thousand copies of the decree were to be struck off, and the distribution was provided for without delay.

Then, as it was one of their rules that the person interested should be informed of what the court had done respecting him, the same commissioners proceeded to the hôtel of the Duc d'Aiguillon, who had just arrived in Paris for an important interview, — no less, indeed, than to have a clear and open explanation, which had become necessary between the duke and his uncle, the marshal.

Thanks to Rafté, all Versailles had been informed within an hour of the noble resistance of the old duke to the king's orders, in reference to the portfolio of Monsieur de Choiseul. Thanks to Versailles, all Paris and all France had learned the same news; so that Richelieu had found himself for some time past on the summit of popularity, from which he made political grimaces at Madame Dubarry and his dear nephew.

The position was unfavorable for Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was already so unpopular. The marshal, hated, but at the same time feared, by the people, because he was the living type of that nobility which was so respected and so respectable under Louis XV., — the marshal, so versatile in his character that, after having chosen a part, he was

able to withdraw from it without difficulty when circumstances required it, or when a bon-mot might be the result, — Richelieu, we say, was a dangerous enemy ; the more so as the worst part of his enmity was always that which he concealed, in order, as he said, to create a surprise.

The Duc d'Aiguillon, since his interview with Madame Dubarry, had two flaws in his coat of mail. Suspecting how much anger and thirst for revenge Richelieu concealed under the apparent equability of his temper, he acted as mariners do in certain cases of difficulty, — he burst the waterspout with his cannon, assured that the danger would be less if it were faced boldly. He set about looking everywhere for his uncle, therefore, in order to have a serious conversation with him ; but nothing was more difficult than this, since the marshal had discovered his wish.

Marches and countermarches were made. When the marshal saw his nephew at a distance, he sent him a smile, and immediately surrounded himself by people who rendered all communication impossible ; thus putting the enemy at defiance as from an impregnable fort.

The Duc d'Aiguillon burst the waterspout. He simply presented himself at his uncle's hôtel at Versailles ; but Rafté, from his post at the little window of the hôtel looking upon the court, recognized the liveries of the duke, and warned his master. The duke entered the marshal's bedroom, where he found Rafté alone, who, with a most confidential smile, was so indiscreet as to inform the nephew that his uncle had not slept at home that night.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon bit his lips and retired. When he returned to his hôtel, he wrote to the marshal to request an audience. The marshal could not refuse to

reply. If he replied, he could not refuse an audience; and if he granted the audience, how could he refuse a full explanation? Monsieur d'Aiguillon resembled too much those polite and engaging duellists who hide their evil designs under a fascinating and graceful exterior, lead their man upon the ground with bows and reverences, and there put him to death without pity.

The marshal's self-love was not so powerful as to mislead him; he knew his nephew's power. Once in his presence, his opponent would force from him either a pardon or a concession. Now, Richelieu never pardoned any one, and concessions to an enemy are always a dangerous fault in politics. Therefore, on receipt of Monsieur d'Aiguillon's letter, he pretended to have left Paris for several days.

Rafté, whom he consulted upon this point, gave him the following advice: "We are in a fair way to ruin Monsieur d'Aiguillon. Our friends of the parliament will do the work. If Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who suspects this, can lay his hand upon you before the explosion, he will force from you a promise to assist him in case of misfortune; for your resentment is of that kind that you cannot openly gratify it at the expense of your family interest. If, on the contrary, you refuse, Monsieur d'Aiguillon will leave you, knowing you to be his enemy and attributing all his misfortunes to you; and he will go away comforted, as people always are when they have found out the cause of their complaint, even although the complaint itself be not removed."

"That is quite true," replied Richelieu; "but I cannot conceal myself forever. How many days will it be before the explosion takes place?"

"Six days, Monseigneur."

"Are you sure?"

Rafté drew from his pocket a letter from a counsellor of the parliament. This letter contained only the two following lines: —

It has been decided that the decree shall be passed. It will take place on Thursday, the final day fixed on by the company.

"Then the affair is very simple," replied the marshal; "send the duke back his letter, with a note from your own hand: —

MONSIEUR LE DUC, — You have doubtless heard of the departure of Monsieur le Maréchal for . . . This change of air has been judged indispensable by the marshal's physician, who thinks him rather overworked. If, as I believe is the case, after what you did me the honor to tell me the other day, you wish to have an interview with Monseigneur, I can assure you that on Thursday evening next the duke, on his return from . . . , will sleep in his hôtel in Paris, where you will certainly find him.

And now," added the marshal, "hide me somewhere until Thursday."

Rafté punctually fulfilled these instructions; the letter was written and sent, the hiding-place was found. Only, one evening, Richelieu, who began to feel very much wearied, slipped out and proceeded to Trianon to speak to Nicole. He risked nothing, or thought he risked nothing, by this step, knowing the Duc d'Aiguillon to be at the pavilion of Luciennes.

The result of this manœuvre was that, even if Monsieur d'Aiguillon suspected something, he could not foresee the blow which menaced him until he had actually met his enemy's sword. The delay until Thursday satisfied him; on that day he left Versailles with the hope of at last meeting and combating this impalpable antagonist.

This Thursday was, as we have said, the day on which parliament was to proclaim its decree.

An agitation, low and muttering as yet, but quite intelligible to the Parisian, who knows so well the level of these popular waves, reigned in the wide streets through which Monsieur d'Aiguillon's carriage passed. No notice was taken of him, for he had observed the precaution of coming in a carriage without a coat-of-arms or other heraldic distinctions.

Here and there he saw busy-looking persons, who were showing each other some paper which they read with many gesticulations, and collecting in noisy groups, like ants round a piece of sugar fallen to the ground. But this was the period of inoffensive agitation; the people were then in the habit of congregating together in this manner for a corn-tax, for an article in the "Gazette de Holland," for a verse of Voltaire's, or for a song against Dubarry or Maupeou.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon drove straight to Monsieur de Richelieu's hôtel. He found there only Rafté. "The marshal," the secretary said, "was expected every moment; some delay of the post must have detained him at the barrier."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon proposed waiting, — not without expressing some impatience to Rafté, for he took this excuse as a new defeat. His ill-humor increased, however, when Rafté told him that the marshal would be in despair on his return to find that Monsieur d'Aiguillon had been kept waiting; that besides, he was not to sleep in Paris, as he had at first intended; and that, most probably, he would not return from the country alone, and would just call in passing at his hôtel to see if there were any news; that therefore Monsieur d'Aiguillon would do better to return to his house, where the marshal could call as he passed.

"Listen, Rafté," said D'Aiguillon, who had become more gloomy during this mysterious reply; "you are my uncle's conscience, and I trust you will answer me as an honest man. I am played upon, am I not, and the marshal does not wish to see me? Do not interrupt me, Rafté; you have been a valuable counsellor to me, and I might have been, and can yet be, a good friend to you; must I return to Versailles?"

"Monsieur le Duc, I assure you, upon my honor, you will receive a visit at your own house from the marshal in less than an hour."

"Then I can as well wait here, since he will come this way."

"I have had the honor of informing you that he will probably not be alone."

"I understand, — and I have your word, Rafté." At these words the duke retired in deep thought, but with an air as noble and graceful as the marshal's was the reverse when, after his nephew's departure, he emerged from a cabinet with a glass door.

The marshal smiled like one of those hideous demons which Callot has introduced in his "Temptations." "He suspects nothing, Rafté?" said he.

"Nothing, Monseigneur."

"What time is it?"

"The time has nothing to do with the matter, Monseigneur. You must wait until our little attorney of the Châtelet makes his appearance. The commissioners are still at the printer's."

Monsieur Rafté had scarcely finished, when a footman opened a secret door, and introduced a personage, very ugly, very greasy, very black, — one of those living pens for which Monsieur Dubarry professed such a profound antipathy.

Rafté pushed the marshal into the cabinet, and hastened, smiling, to meet this man.

"Ah! it is you, Maître Flageot?" said he; "I am delighted to see you."

"Your servant, Monsieur Rafté. Well, the business is done."

"Is it printed?"

"Five thousand are struck off. The first copies are already scattered over the town; the others are drying."

"What a misfortune, my dear Monsieur Flageot! What a blow to the marshal's family!"

Monsieur Flageot, to avoid the necessity of answering, — that is, of telling a lie, — drew a large silver box from his pocket and slowly inhaled a pinch of Spanish snuff.

"Well, what is to be done now?" asked Rafté.

"The forms, my dear Monsieur, the forms. The commissioners, now that they are sure of the printing and the distribution, will immediately enter their carriages, which are waiting at the door of the printing-office, and proceed to make known the decree to Monsieur le Duc d'Aiguillon, who happens luckily — I mean unfortunately, Monsieur Rafté — to be in his hôtel in Paris, where they can have an interview with him in person."

Rafté hastily seized an enormous bag of legal documents from a shelf, which he gave to Monsieur Flageot, saying: "These are the suits which I mentioned to you, Monsieur. The marshal has the greatest confidence in your abilities, and leaves this affair, which ought to prove most remunerative, entirely in your hands. I have to thank you for your good offices in this deplorable conflict of Monsieur d'Aiguillon with the all-powerful parliament of Paris, and also for your very valuable advice."

Rafté gently, but with some haste, pushed Monsieur

Flageot, delighted with the weight of his burden, toward the door of the antechamber. Then, releasing the marshal from his prison, "Quick, Monseigneur," said he; "to your carriage! You have no time to lose, if you wish to be present at the scene. Take care that your horses go more quickly than those of the commissioners."

CHAPTER LII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT THE PATH OF A MINISTER IS NOT ALWAYS STREWN WITH ROSES.

THE Maréchal de Richelieu's horses did go more quickly than those of the commissioners, for the marshal entered first into the courtyard of the Hôtel d'Aiguillon.

The duke did not expect his uncle, and was preparing to return to Luciennes to inform Madame Dubarry that the enemy had been unmasked, when the announcement of the marshal's arrival roused his discouraged mind from its torpor.

The duke hastened to meet his uncle, and took both his hands in his with a warmth of affection proportionate to the fear he had experienced. The marshal was as affectionate as the duke; the tableau was touching. The Duc d'Aiguillon, however, was manifestly endeavoring to hasten the period of explanation, while the marshal, on the contrary, delayed it as much as possible, by looking at the pictures, the bronzes, or the tapestry, and complaining of great fatigue.

The duke cut off the marshal's retreat, imprisoned him in an armchair, as Monsieur de Villars imprisoned the Prince Eugene in Marchiennes, and began the attack. "Uncle," said he, "is it true that you, the most discriminating man in France, have judged so ill of me as to think that my ambition did not include us both?"

There was no longer room for retreat; Richelieu decided on his plan of action. "What do you mean by that?"

he replied; "and in what do you perceive that I judged unfavorably of you, or the reverse, my dear nephew?"

"Uncle, you are offended with me."

"But for what, and how?"

"Oh! no more of these evasions, Monsieur le Maréchal; in one word, you avoid me when I need your assistance."

"Upon my honor, I do not understand you."

"I will explain, then. The king refused to nominate you for his minister; and because I, on my part, accepted the command of the Light Horse, you imagine that I have deserted and betrayed you. That dear countess, too, who loves you so well — "

Here Richelieu listened eagerly, but not to his nephew's words alone. "You say she loves me well, this dear countess?" he interrupted.

"And I can prove it."

"But, my dear fellow, I never doubted it. I send for you to assist me to push the wheel; you are younger, and therefore stronger than I am; you succeed, I fail. That is in the natural course of things, and on my faith I cannot imagine why you have all these scruples. If you have acted for my interest, you will be a hundredfold repaid; if against me — Well! I shall only return the blow. Does that require explanation?"

"In truth, Uncle — "

"You are a child, Duke. Your position is magnificent, — a peer of France, a duke, a commander of the Light Horse, minister in six weeks; you ought to be beyond the influence of all futile intrigues. Success absolves, my dear child. Suppose — I like apologues — suppose that we are the two mules in the fable. But what noise is that?"

"Nothing, my dear uncle; proceed."

"There is something; I hear a carriage in the courtyard."

"Do not let it interrupt you, Uncle, pray; your conversation interests me extremely. I like apologues too."

"Well, my friend, I was going to say that when you are prosperous, you will never meet with reproaches, nor need you fear the spite of the envious; but if you limp, if you fall — ah, the devil! you must take care; then it is that the wolf will attack you. But you see I was right; there is a noise in the antechamber, — it is the portfolio which they are bringing you, no doubt. The little countess must have exerted herself for you."

The usher entered. "Messieurs the commissioners of the parliament," said he, uneasily.

"Ha!" exclaimed Richelieu.

"The commissioners of the parliament here! What do they want with me?" replied the duke, not at all reassured by his uncle's smile.

"In the king's name!" cried a sonorous voice at the end of the antechamber.

"Oh, ho!" cried Richelieu.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon turned very pale; he rose, however, and advanced to the threshold of the apartment to introduce the two commissioners, behind whom were stationed two motionless ushers, and in the distance a host of alarmed footmen.

"What is your errand here?" asked the duke, in a trembling voice.

"Have we the honor of speaking to the Duc d'Aiguillon?" said one of the commissioners.

"I am the Duc d'Aiguillon, gentlemen."

The commissioner, bowing profoundly, drew from his belt an act in proper form, and read it in a loud and distinct voice.

It was the decree, detailed, complete, and circumstantial, which declared D'Aiguillon seriously affected and incul-

pated by suspicions, even by deeds, involving his honor, and suspended him from his functions as peer of the realm.

The duke listened to the reading like a man thunderstruck. He stood motionless as a statue on its pedestal, and did not even hold out his hand to take the copy of the decree which the commissioners of the parliament offered him.

It was the marshal who, also standing, but alert and active, took the paper, read it, and returned the bow of the commissioners. They had already withdrawn when the Duc d'Aiguillon recovered from his stupor.

"This is a severe blow," said Richelieu; "you are no longer a peer of France, — it is humiliating."

The duke turned to his uncle as if he had only at that moment recovered the power of life and thought.

"You did not expect it?" asked Richelieu in the same tone.

"And you, Uncle?" rejoined D'Aiguillon.

"How do you imagine any one could suspect that the parliament would strike so bold a blow at the favored courtier of the king and his favorite? These people will ruin themselves."

The duke sat down, and leaned his burning cheek on his hand.

"But if," continued the old marshal, forcing the dagger deeper into the wound, "if the parliament degrades you from the peerage because you are nominated to the command of the Light Horse, they will decree you a prisoner and condemn you to the stake when you are appointed minister. These people hate you, D'Aiguillon; do not trust them."

The duke bore this cruel irony with the fortitude of a hero; his misfortune raised and strengthened his mind. Richelieu thought this fortitude was only insensibility, or

want of comprehension, perhaps, and that the wound was not deep enough.

"Being no longer a peer," said he, "you will be less exposed to the hatred of these fellows. Have recourse to a few years of obscurity. Besides, look you, this obscurity, which will be your safeguard, will come without your seeking it. Deprived of your functions of peer, you will have more difficulty in reaching the ministry, and may perhaps escape the business altogether. But if you will struggle, my dear fellow, why, you have Madame Dubarry on your side; she loves you, and she is a powerful support."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon rose. He did not even cast an angry look upon the marshal in return for all the suffering the old man had inflicted upon him.

"You are right, Uncle," he replied, calmly, "and your wisdom is shown in this last advice. The Comtesse Dubarry, to whom you had the goodness to present me, and to whom you spoke so favorably of me and with so much zeal that every one at Luciennes can bear witness to it, — Madame Dubarry will defend me. Thank God, she loves me; she is brave, and exerts an all-powerful influence over the mind of the king! Thanks, Uncle, for your advice; I fly thither as to a haven of safety. My horses! Bourgignon, to Luciennes!"

The marshal remained with an unfinished smile upon his lips. Monsieur d'Aiguillon bowed respectfully to his uncle and quitted the apartment, leaving the marshal very much perplexed, and above all very much confused, at the eagerness with which he had attacked this noble and sensitive victim.

There was some consolation for the old marshal in the mad joy of the Parisians when they read in the evening the ten thousand copies of the decree, which were scrambled for in the streets. But he could not help sighing

when Rafté asked for an account of the evening. Nevertheless he gave it, without concealing anything.

"Then the blow is parried?" said the secretary.

"Yes, and no, Rafté; but the wound is not mortal, and we have at Trianon something better, which I reproach myself for not having made my sole care. We have started two hares, Rafté; it was very foolish."

"Why, if you seize the best?" replied Rafté.

"Oh! my friend, remember that the best is always the one we have not taken; and we would invariably give the one we hold for the one which has escaped."

Rafté shrugged his shoulders; and yet Monsieur de Richelieu was in the right.

"You think," said Rafté, "that Monsieur d'Aiguillon will get out of this?"

"Do you think the king will, simpleton?"

"Oh! the king finds an opening everywhere; but this matter does not concern the king, I think."

"Where the king can pass, Madame Dubarry will pass, as she holds fast by his skirts; where Madame Dubarry has passed, D'Aiguillon will pass also. But you understand nothing of politics, Rafté."

"Monseigneur, Maître Flageot is not of your opinion."

"Well, what does this Maître Flageot say? But first of all, tell me what he is."

"He is an attorney, Monseigneur."

"Well?"

"Well! Monsieur Flageot thinks that the king himself cannot get out of this matter."

"Oh, ho! — and who will stop the lion?"

"Faith, Monseigneur, — the rat!"

"And you believe him?"

"I always believe an attorney who promises to do evil."

"We shall see what means Maître Flageot intends to employ, Rafté."

"That is what I say, Monseigneur."

"Come to supper, then, that I may get to bed. It has quite upset me to see that my poor nephew is no longer peer of France, and will not be minister. I am an uncle, Rafté, after all!" Monsieur de Richelieu sighed, and then began to laugh.

"You may have every quality, however, requisite for a minister," replied Rafté.

CHAPTER LIII.

MONSIEUR D'AIGUILLON TAKES HIS REVENGE.

The morning succeeding the day on which the terrible decree had thrown Paris and Versailles into an uproar, when every one was anxiously awaiting the result of this decree, the Duc de Richelieu, who had returned to Versailles and had resumed his usual mode of life, saw Rafté enter his apartment with a letter in his hand. The secretary scrutinized and weighed this letter with such an appearance of anxiety that his emotion quickly communicated itself to his master.

"What is the matter now?" asked the marshal.

"Something not very agreeable, I imagine, Monseigneur, which is enclosed in this letter."

"Why do you imagine so?"

"Because the letter is from the Duc d'Aiguillon."

"Ha!" said the duke; "from my nephew?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Maréchal; after the king's council broke up, an usher of the chamber called on me and handed me this paper for you. I have been turning it over and over for the last ten minutes, and I cannot help suspecting that it contains some evil tidings."

The duke held out his hand. "Give it to me," said he; "I am brave."

"I warn you," interrupted Rafté, "that when the usher gave me the paper, he chuckled outrageously."

"The devil! that bodes ill," replied the marshal; "but give it to me, nevertheless."

"And he added: 'Monsieur le Duc d'Aiguillon wishes Monsieur le Maréchal to have this immediately.'"

"Pain! thou shalt not make me say that thou art an evil," said the marshal, breaking the seal with a firm hand; and he read the letter.

"Ha! you change countenance," said Rafté, standing, with his hands crossed behind him, in an attitude of observation.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Richelieu, continuing to read.

"It seems, then, that it is serious?"

"You look quite delighted."

"Of course, — I see that I was not mistaken."

The marshal read on. "The king is good," said he, after a moment's pause.

"He appoints Monsieur d'Aiguillon minister?"

"Better than that."

"Oh! what, then?"

"Read and ponder."

Rafté in his turn read the note. It was in the handwriting of D'Aiguillon, and was couched in the following terms: —

My dear Uncle, — Your good advice has borne its fruit. I confided my wrongs to that excellent friend of our house, the Comtesse Dubarry, who has deigned to lay them at his Majesty's feet. The king is indignant at the violence with which the gentlemen of the parliament pursue me, and in consideration of the services I have so faithfully rendered him, his Majesty, in this morning's council, has annulled the decree of parliament, and has commanded me to continue my functions as peer of France.

Knowing the pleasure this news will cause you, my dear Uncle, I send you the tenor of the decision which his Majesty in council came to to-day. I have had it copied by a secretary, and you have the announcement before any one else.

Deign to believe in my affectionate respect, my dear Uncle, and continue to bestow on me your good-will and your good advice.

DUC D'AIGUILLON.

"He mocks at me into the bargain!" cried Richelieu.

"Faith, I think so, Monseigneur!"

"The king throws himself into the hornets' nest!"

"You would not believe me yesterday, when I told you so."

"I did not say he would not throw himself into it, Rafté; I said he would contrive to get out of it. Now, you see, he does get out of it."

"The fact is, the parliament is beaten."

"And I also."

"For the present, yes."

"Forever! Yesterday I foresaw it; and you consoled me so well that some misfortune could not fail to ensue."

"Monseigneur, you despair a little too soon, I think."

"Maître Rafté, you are a fool! I am beaten, and I must pay the stake. You do not fully comprehend, perhaps, how disagreeable it is to me to be the laughing-stock of Luciennes. At this moment the duke is mocking me in the arms of Madame Dubarry; Mademoiselle Chon and Monsieur Jean are roaring themselves hoarse at my expense, while the little negro ceases to stuff himself with dainties to make game of me. *Parbleu!* I have a tolerably good temper, but all this makes me furious."

"Furious, Monseigneur?"

"I have said it, — furious!"

"Then you have done what you should not have done," said Rafté, philosophically.

"You urged me on, Master Secretary."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"Why, what is it to me whether Monsieur d'Aiguillon is a peer of France or not, I ask you, Monseigneur? Your nephew does me no injury, I think."

"Master Rafté, you are impertinent!"

"You have been telling me so for the last forty-nine years, Monseigneur."

"Well, I shall repeat it again."

"Not for forty-nine years more, that is one comfort."

"Rafté, if this is the way you care for my interests —"

"The interests of your little passions? No, Monsieur le Duc, never! Man of génius as you are, you sometimes commit follies which I could not forgive even in an understrapper like myself."

"Explain yourself, Rafté; and if I am wrong, I will confess it."

"Yesterday you thirsted for vengeance, did you not? You wished to behold the humiliation of your nephew; you wished, as it were, to be the bearer of the decree of parliament, and gloat over the tremblings and palpitations of your victim, as Monsieur Crébillon the younger says. Well, Monsieur le Maréchal, such sights as these must be well paid for; such pleasures cost dear. You are rich; pay, pay, Monsieur le Maréchal!"

"What would you have done in my place, then, O most skilful of tacticians? Come, let me see!"

"Nothing! I would have waited without giving any sign of life. But you itched to oppose the parliament to the Dubarry from the moment she found that Monsieur d'Aiguillon was a younger man than yourself."

A groan was the marshal's only reply.

"Well," continued Rafté, "the parliament was tolerably well prompted by you before it did what it has done. The decree once passed, you should have offered your services to your nephew, who would have suspected nothing."

"That is all well and good, and I admit that I did wrong; but you should have warned me."

"I hinder any evil. You take me for some one else, Monsieur le Maréchal; you repeat to every one that comes that I am your creature, that you have trained me, and yet you would have me not delighted when I see a folly committed or a misfortune approaching. Fie! fie!"

"Then a misfortune is to come, Master Sorcerer?"

"Certainly."

"What misfortune?"

"You will be stubborn, and between the parliament and Madame Dubarry, Monsieur d'Aiguillon will take the joint; then he will be minister, and you exiled, or in the Bastille."

The marshal in his anger upset the contents of his snuff-box upon the carpet. "In the Bastille!" said he, shrugging his shoulders; "is Louis XV., think you, Louis XIV.?"

"No; but Madame Dubarry, supported by Monsieur d'Aiguillon, is quite equal to Madame de Maintenon. Take care! I do not know any princess in the present day who would bring you bonbons and eggs."

"That is enough for prognostics," replied the marshal, after a long silence. "You read the future; but what of the present, if you please?"

"Monsieur le Maréchal is too wise for me to give him advice."

"Come, Master Witty-pate, are you too not mocking me!"

"I beg you to remark, Monsieur le Maréchal, that you confound dates. A man is never called a witty-pate after forty; now, I am sixty-seven."

"No matter, assist me out of this scrape; and quickly too, — quickly!"

"By an advice?"

"By anything you please."

"The time has not come yet."

"Now you are certainly jesting."

"Would to God I were! When I jest, the subject will be a jesting matter, — and unfortunately this is not."

"What do you mean by saying that it is not yet time?"

"No, Monseigneur, it is not time. If the announcement of the king's decree were known in Paris, I would not say — Shall we send a courier to the President d'Aligre?"

"That they may laugh at us all the sooner?"

"What a ridiculous self-love, Monsieur le Maréchal! You would make a saint lose patience. Stay! let me finish my plan of a descent on England, and you can finish drowning yourself in your portfolio intrigue, since the business is already half-done."

The marshal was accustomed to these sullen humors of his secretary. He knew that when his melancholy had once declared itself, he was dangerous to touch with ungloved fingers.

"Come," said he, "do not sulk at me; and if I do not understand, explain yourself."

"Then Monseigneur wishes me to trace out a line of conduct for him?"

"Certainly, since you think I cannot conduct myself."

"Well, then, listen."

"I am all attention."

"You must send by a trusty messenger to Monsieur d'Aligre," said Rafté, abruptly, "the Duc d'Aiguillon's letter; and also the decree of the king in council. You must then wait till the parliament has met and deliberated upon it, which will take place immediately; whereupon,

you must order your carriage and pay a visit to your attorney, Maître Flageot."

"Eh!" said Richelieu, whom this name startled as it had on the previous day, "Monsieur Flageot again! What the devil has Maître Flageot to do with all this, and what am I to do at his house?"

"I have had the honor to tell you, Monseigneur, that Maître Flageot is your attorney."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, if he is your attorney, he has certain bags of yours, — certain lawsuits on hand; you must go and ask him about them."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Maréchal, to-morrow."

"But all this is your affair, Monsieur Rafté."

"By no means; by no means! When Maître Flageot was a simple scribbling drudge, then I could treat with him as an equal; but as, dating from to-morrow, Maître Flageot is an Attila, a scourge of kings, — neither more nor less, — it is not asking too much of a duke, a peer, a marshal of France, to converse with this all-powerful man."

"Is this serious, or are we acting a farce?"

"You will see to-morrow if it is serious, Monseigneur."

"But tell me what will be the result of my visit to your Maître Flageot."

"I should be very sorry to do so; you would endeavor to prove to me to-morrow that you had guessed it beforehand. Good-night, Monsieur le Maréchal. Remember, a courier to Monsieur d'Aligre immediately; a visit to Maître Flageot to-morrow. Oh! the address? — The coachman knows it; he has driven me there frequently during the last week."

CHAPTER LIV.

IN WHICH THE READER WILL ONCE MORE MEET AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE WHOM HE THOUGHT LOST, AND WHOM PERHAPS HE DID NOT REGRET.

THE reader will no doubt ask why Maître Flageot, who is about to play so important a part in our story, was called attorney instead of advocate; and as the reader is justified in asking that question, we will satisfy his curiosity.

The vacations had for some time been frequent in parliament, and the advocates pleaded so seldom that their speeches were not worth speaking of. Maître Flageot, foreseeing the time when there would be no pleading at all, made certain arrangements with Maître Guildou, the attorney, in virtue of which the latter yielded him up office and clients on consideration of the sum of twenty-five thousand francs paid down. That is how Maître Flageot became an attorney. But if we are asked how he managed to pay the twenty-five thousand francs, we reply, by marrying Mademoiselle Marguerite, to whom this sum was left as an inheritance about the end of the year 1770, — three months before Monsieur de Choiseul's exile.

Maître Flageot had been long distinguished for his persevering adherence to the opposition party. Once an attorney, he redoubled his violence, and by this violence succeeded in gaining some celebrity. It was this celebrity, together with the publication of an incendiary pamphlet

on the subject of the conflict between Monsieur d'Aiguillon and Monsieur de la Chalotais, which attracted the attention of Monsieur Rafté, who had occasion to keep himself well informed concerning the affairs of parliament.

But notwithstanding his new dignity and his increasing importance, Maître Flageot did not leave the Rue du Petit-Lion-Saint-Sauveur. It would have been too cruel a blow for Mademoiselle Marguerite not to have heard the neighbors call her Madame Flageot, and not to have inspired respect in the breasts of Monsieur Guildou's clerks, who had entered the service of the new attorney.

The reader may readily imagine what Monsieur de Richelieu suffered in traversing Paris — the filthy Paris of that region — to reach the disgusting hole which the Parisian magistrature dignified by the name of "street." In front of Maître Flageot's door, Monsieur de Richelieu's carriage was stopped by another carriage, which pulled up at the same moment. The marshal perceived a woman's headdress protruding from the window of this carriage; and as his sixty-five years of age had not quenched the ardor of his gallantry, he hastily jumped out on the muddy pavement, and proceeded to offer his hand to the lady, who was unaccompanied.

But this day the marshal's evil star was in the ascendant. A long, withered leg which was stretched out to reach the step betrayed the old woman. A wrinkled face, adorned with a dark streak of rouge, proved further that the woman was not only old, but decrepit.

Nevertheless there was no room for retreat; the marshal had made the movement, and the movement had been seen. Besides, Monsieur de Richelieu himself was no longer young. In the mean time the litigant — for what woman with a carriage would have entered that street had she not been a litigant? — the litigant, we say, did not

imitate the duke's hesitation ; with a ghastly smile she placed her hand in Richelieu's.

"I have seen that face somewhere before," thought Richelieu ; then he added : "Does Madame also intend to visit Maître Flageot ? "

"Yes, Monsieur le Duc," replied the old lady.

"Oh, I have the honor to be known to you, Madame ! " exclaimed the duke, disagreeably surprised, and stopping on the threshold of the dark passage.

"Who does not know the Duc de Richelieu ? " was the reply. "I should not be a woman if I did not."

"This she-ape thinks she is a woman ! " murmured the conqueror of Mahon, and he made a most graceful bow.

"If I may venture to ask the question," added he, "to whom have I the honor of speaking ? "

"I am the Comtesse de Béarn, at your service," replied the old lady, curtseying with courtly reverence upon the dirty floor of the passage, and about three inches from an open trap-door, through which the marshal, with malicious anticipation, expected her to disappear as she bowed the third time.

"I am delighted, Madame — enchanted," said he ; "and I return a thousand thanks to fate. You also have lawsuits on hand, Countess ? "

"Oh ! Duke, I have only one ; but what a lawsuit ! Is it possible that you have never heard of it ? "

"Oh ! frequently, frequently, — that great lawsuit. True ; I entreat your pardon. How the devil could I have forgotten that ? "

"Against the Saluces."

"Against the Saluces, yes, Countess, — the lawsuit about which the song was written."

"A song ? " said the old lady, piqued, — "what song ? "

"Take care, Madame, there is a trap-door here," said

the duke, who saw that the old woman was decided not to throw herself into the cellar; "take hold of the balustrade, — I mean the cord."

The old lady mounted the first steps. The duke followed her. "Yes, a very humorous song," said he.

"A humorous song on my lawsuit?"

"To be sure! I will leave you to judge, — but perhaps you know it?"

"Not at all."

"It is to the tune of 'The Bourbonnaise;' it runs so: —

"'Embarrassed, Countess, as I stand,
Give me, I pray, a helping hand,
And I am quite at your command.'

It is Madame Dubarry who speaks, you must know."

"That is very impertinent toward her."

"Oh! what can you expect? — the ballad-mongers respect no one. Heavens! how greasy this cord is! Then you reply as follows: —

"'I 'm very old, and stubborn too;
I 'm forced at law my rights to sue.
Ah, who can help me? Tell me, who?'"

"Oh, Monsieur, it is frightful!" cried the countess; "a woman of quality is not to be insulted in this manner."

"Madame, excuse me if I have sung out of tune; these stairs heat me so. Ah! here we are at last. Allow me to pull the bell."

The old lady, grumbling all the time, made way for the duke to pass. The marshal rang, and Madame Flageot, who in becoming an attorney's wife had not ceased to fill the functions of portress and cook, opened the door. The two litigants were ushered into Maître Flageot's office,

where they found that worthy in a state of furious excitement, and with a pen in his mouth, hard at work dictating a terrible plea to his head-clerk.

"Good heavens, Maître Flageot! what is the matter?" cried the countess, at whose voice the attorney turned round.

"Ah! Madame, your most humble servant, — a chair here for the Comtesse de Béarn. This gentleman is a friend of yours, Madame? Eh! I cannot be mistaken, — the Duc de Richelieu in my house! Another chair, Bernardet, — another chair."

"Maître Flageot," said the countess, "how does my lawsuit get on, pray?"

"Ah, Madame! I was just now working for you."

"Very good, Maître Flageot, very good."

"And after a fashion, my lady, which will make some noise, I hope."

"Ahem! Take care!"

"Oh! Madame, there is no longer any occasion for caution."

"Then if you are busy about my affair, you can give an audience to the duke."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Duc," said Maître Flageot; "but you are too gallant not to understand — "

"I understand, Maître Flageot; I understand."

"But now I can attend to you exclusively."

"Don't be uneasy; I shall not abuse your good-nature. You know what brings me here?"

"The bags which Monsieur Rafté gave me the other day."

"Some papers relative to my lawsuit of — my suit about — What the devil! you must know what suit I mean, Maître Flageot?"

"Your lawsuit about the lands of Chapenat?"

"Very probably; and will you gain it for me? That would be very kind on your part."

"Monsieur le Duc, it is postponed indefinitely."

"Postponed! And why?"

"It will not be brought forward in less than a year, at the earliest."

"For what reason, may I ask?"

"Circumstances, Monsieur le Duc, circumstances; you have heard of his Majesty's decree?"

"I think so; but which one? His Majesty issues so many."

"The one which annuls ours."

"Very well; and what then?"

"Well! Monsieur le Duc, we shall reply by burning our ships."

"Burning your ships, my dear friend? — you will burn the ships of the parliament? I do not quite comprehend you; I was not aware that the parliament had ships."

"The first chamber refuses to register, perhaps?" inquired the Comtesse de Béarn, whom Richelieu's lawsuit in no way prevented from thinking of her own.

"Better than that."

"The second one also?"

"That would be a mere nothing. Both chambers have resolved not to render any more judgments until the king shall have dismissed Monsieur d'Aiguillon."

"Bah!" exclaimed the marshal, rubbing his hands.

"Render no more judgments on what?" asked the countess, alarmed.

"On the lawsuits, Madame."

"They will not give judgment on my lawsuit?" exclaimed the Comtesse de Béarn, with a dismay which she did not even attempt to conceal.

"Neither on yours, Madame, nor the duke's."

"It is iniquitous! It is rebellion against his Majesty's orders, that!"

"Madame," replied the attorney, majestically, "the king has forgotten himself; we also shall forget ourselves."

"Monsieur Flageot, you will be sent to the Bastille. Remember, I warn you."

"I shall go singing, Madame; and if I am sent thither, all my fellow-members of parliament will follow me, carrying palms in their hands."

"He is mad!" said the countess to Richelieu.

"We are all the same," replied the attorney.

"Oh, oh!" said the marshal, "that is becoming rather curious."

"But, Monsieur, you said just now that you were working for me," replied Madame de Béarn.

"I said so, and it is quite true. You, Madame, are the first example I cite in my narration; here is the paragraph which relates to you."

He snatched the draft from his clerk's hand, fixed his spectacles upon his nose, and read with emphasis:—

"Their position ruined, their fortune compromised, their rights trampled under foot! His Majesty will understand how much they must have suffered. Thus the petitioner had intrusted to his care a very important suit, upon which the fortune of one of the first families in the kingdom depends; by his zeal, his industry, and, he ventures to say, his talents, this suit was progressing favorably, and the rights of the most noble and most powerful lady, Angélique Charlotte Véronique, Comtesse de Béarn, were on the point of being recognized, proclaimed, when the breath of discord — engulfing —"

"I had just got so far, Madame," said the attorney, drawing himself up; "but I think the simile is not amiss."

"Monsieur Flageot," said the countess, "it is forty years ago since I first employed your father, who proved most worthy of my patronage; I continued that patronage to you; you have gained ten or twelve thousand francs by my suit, and you would probably have gained as many more."

"Write down all that," said Flageot, eagerly, to his clerk; "it is a testimony, a proof. It shall be inserted in the confirmation."

"But now," interrupted the countess, "I take back all my papers from your charge; from this moment you have lost my confidence."

Maître Flageot, thunderstruck by this disgrace, remained for a moment almost stupefied; but rising under the blow like a martyr who dies for his religion, "Be it so," said he. "Bernardet, give the papers back to madame; and you will insert this fact," he added, "that the petitioner preferred his conscience to his fortune."

"I beg your pardon, Countess," whispered the marshal in the countess's ear, "but it seems to me that you have acted without reflection."

"In what respect, Monsieur le Duc?"

"You take your papers from this honest attorney, but for what purpose?"

"To take them to another attorney, to another advocate!" exclaimed the countess.

Maître Flageot raised his eyes to heaven with a mournful smile of self-denial and stoic resignation.

"But," continued the marshal, still whispering in the countess's ear, "if it has been decided that the chambers will not adjudicate, my dear Madame, another attorney can do no more for you than Maître Flageot."

"It is a league, then?"

"*Pardieu!* do you think Maître Flageot fool enough

to protest, to lose his practice, if his fellow-lawyers were not agreed to do the same, and consequently support him?"

"But you, Monsieur, what will you do?"

"For my part, I think Maître Flageot a very honest attorney, and that my papers are as safe in his possession as in my own. Consequently, I shall leave them with him, of course paying him as if my suit were going on."

"It is well said, Monsieur le Maréchal, that you are a generous, liberal-minded man!" exclaimed Maître Flageot; "I will extend your fame, Monseigneur."

"You overwhelm me, my dear attorney," replied Richelieu, bowing.

"Bernardet," cried the enthusiastic attorney to his clerk, "you will insert in the peroration a eulogy on the Maréchal de Richelieu!"

"No, no, by no means, Maître Flageot! I beg you will do nothing of the kind!" replied the marshal, hastily. "Oh, the devil! that would be a pretty action! I prefer secrecy in what it is customary to call good actions. Do not disoblige me, Maître Flageot; I shall deny it, look you, — I shall positively contradict it; my modesty is sensitive. Well, Countess, what say you?"

"I say my suit shall be judged. I must have a judgment, and I will."

"And I say, Madame, that if your suit is judged, the king must first send the Swiss guards, the Light Horse, and twenty pieces of cannon into the great hall," replied Maître Flageot, with a belligerent air which completed the consternation of the litigant.

"Then you do not think his Majesty can get out of this affair?" said Richelieu, in a low voice to Flageot.

"Impossible, Monsieur le Maréchal! It is an unheard-of case. No more justice in France: it is as if you were to say no more bread!"

"Do you think so?"

"You will see."

"But the king will be angry."

"We are resolved to brave everything."

"Even exile?"

"Even death, Monsieur le Maréchal! We have courage, although we wear the gown;" and Monsieur Flageot struck his breast vigorously.

"In fact, Madame," said Richelieu to his companion, "I believe that this is an unfortunate step for the ministry."

"Oh, yes!" replied the old countess, after a pause; "it is very unfortunate for me, who never meddle in anything that is taking place, to be dragged into this conflict."

"I think, Madame," said the marshal, "there is some one who could help you in this affair, — a very powerful person. But would that person do it?"

"Is it displaying too much curiosity, Duke, to ask the name of this powerful person?"

"Your goddaughter," said the duke.

"Oh! Madame Dubarry?"

"Yes."

"In fact, that is true; I am obliged to you for the hint."

The duke bit his lips. "Then you will go to Luciennes?" he asked.

"Without hesitation."

"But the Comtesse Dubarry cannot overcome the opposition of parliament."

"I will tell her I must have my suit judged; and as she can refuse me nothing, after the service I have rendered her, she will tell the king she wishes it. His Majesty will speak to the chancellor, and the chancellor has a long arm, Monsieur le Duc. Maître Flageot, be kind enough to continue to study my case well; it may come on sooner than you think. Mark my words."

Maître Flageot turned away his head with an air of incredulity which did not shake the countess in the least. In the mean time the duke had been reflecting.

"Well, Madame, since you are going to Luciennes, will you have the goodness to present my most humble respects?"

"Most willingly, Monsieur le Duc."

"We are companions in misfortune; your suit is in abeyance, and mine also. In supplicating for yourself, you will do so for me too. Moreover, you may express yonder the displeasure these stubborn-headed parliament men cause me; and you will add that it was I who advised you to have recourse to the divinity of Luciennes."

"I will not fail to do so, Monsieur le Duc. Adieu, gentlemen."

"Allow me the honor of conducting you to your carriage. Once more, adieu, Maître Flageot; I leave you to your occupations."

The marshal handed the countess to her carriage. "Rafté was right," said he; "the Flageots will cause a revolution. Thank Heaven, I am supported on both sides! I am of the court, and of the parliament. Madame Dubarry will meddle with politics, and fall alone; if she resists, I have my little petard at Trianon. Decidedly, that devil of a Rafté is of my school; and when I am minister he shall be my chief secretary."

CHAPTER LV.

THE CONFUSION INCREASES.

Madame de Béarn followed Richelieu's advice literally. Two hours and a half after the duke had left her she was waiting in the antechamber at Luciennes, in the company of Monsieur Zamore. It was some time since she had been seen at Madame Dubarry's, and her presence therefore excited a feeling of curiosity in the countess's boudoir when her name was announced.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon had not lost any time either, and he was plotting with the favorite when Chon entered to request an audience for Madame de Béarn. The duke made a movement to retire, but the countess detained him. "I would rather you would remain," said she. "In case my old alms-gatherer comes to ask a loan, you would be most useful to me, for she will ask less."

The duke remained. Madame de Béarn, with a face composed for the occasion, took the chair opposite the countess, which the latter offered to her; and after the first civilities were exchanged, "May I ask to what fortunate chance I am indebted for your presence, Madame?" said Madame Dubarry.

"Ah! Madame," said the old litigant, "a great misfortune."

"What! Madame, — a misfortune?"

"A piece of news which will deeply afflict his Majesty."

"I am all impatience, Madame —"

"The parliament —"

"Ah! ah!" growled the Duc d'Aiguillon.

"Monsieur le Duc d'Aiguillon," said the countess, hastily presenting her guest to her lady visitor, for fear of some unpleasant misunderstanding. But the old countess was as cunning as all the other courtiers put together, and never caused a misunderstanding, except wittingly, and when it seemed likely to benefit her. "I know," said she, "of all the baseness of those rascals, and their want of respect for merit and for rank."

This compliment, aimed directly at the duke, drew a graceful bow from him to the litigant, who rose and bowed in her turn. "But," she continued, "it is not the duke alone who is now concerned, but the entire population; the parliament refuses to act."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Madame Dubarry, throwing herself back upon the sofa; "there will be no more justice in France! Well, what change will that produce?"

The duke smiled. As for Madame de Béarn, instead of taking the affair pleasantly, her morose features darkened still more. "It is a great calamity, Madame," said she.

"Ah! indeed?" replied the favorite.

"It is evident, Madame, that you are happy enough to have no lawsuits."

"Ahem!" said D'Aiguillon, to recall the attention of Madame Dubarry, who at last comprehended the insinuation of the litigant. "Alas! Madame," said she, "it is true; you remind me that if I have no lawsuit, you have a very important one."

"Ah, yes! Madame; and delay will be ruinous to me."

"Poor lady!"

"Unless, Countess, the king takes some decided step."

"Oh! Madame, the king is well inclined to do so. He

will exile messieurs the councillors, and all will be right."

"But, Madame, that would surely be an indefinite adjournment."

"Do you see any remedy, then? Will you be kind enough to point it out to us?"

The litigant concealed her face beneath her hood, like Cæsar expiring under his toga.

"There is one remedy, certainly," said D'Aiguillon; "but perhaps his Majesty might shrink from employing it."

"What is it?" asked the Comtesse de Béarn, with anxiety.

"The ordinary resource of royalty in France when it is rather embarrassed. It is to hold a bed of justice, and to say, 'I will!' when all the opponents say, 'I will not.'"

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Madame de Béarn, with enthusiasm.

"But which must not be divulged," replied D'Aiguillon, diplomatically, and with a gesture which Madame de Béarn fully comprehended.

"Oh! Madame," said she, instantly, "you who have so much influence with the king, persuade him to say, 'I will have the suit of Madame de Béarn determined.' Besides, you know, it was promised long ago."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon bit his lips, bowed to Madame Dubarry, and left the boudoir. He had heard the sound of the king's carriage in the courtyard.

"Here is the king!" said Madame Dubarry, rising to dismiss her visitor.

"Oh! Madame, why will you not permit me to throw myself at his Majesty's feet?"

"To ask him for a bed of justice?" replied the countess, quickly. "Most willingly! Remain here, Madame, since such is your desire."

Scarcely had Madame de Béarn adjusted her headdress when the king entered.

"Ah!" said he, "you have visitors, Countess!"

"Madame de Béarn, Sire."

"Sire, justice!" exclaimed the old lady, making a most profound reverence.

"Oh!" said Louis XV., in a bantering tone imperceptible to those who did not know him, "has any one offended you, Madame?"

"Sire, I ask for justice."

"Against whom?"

"Against the parliament."

"Ah! good," said the king, rubbing his hands; "you complain of my parliament. Well! do me the pleasure to bring them to reason. I too have to complain of them, and I beg you to grant me justice also," added he, imitating the reverence of the old countess.

"But, Sire, you are the king; you are the master."

"The king — yes; the master — not always."

"Sire, proclaim your will."

"I do that every evening, Madame; and they proclaim theirs every morning. Now, as these two wills are diametrically opposed to each other, it is with us as with the earth and the moon, which are ever running the one after the other, without coming together."

"Sire, your voice is powerful enough to drown all the bawlings of these fellows."

"There you are mistaken; I am not an advocate, as they are. If I say yes, they say no; it is impossible for us to come to any arrangement. If, when I have said yes, you can find any means to prevent their saying no, I will make an alliance with you."

"Sire, I have the means."

"Let me hear it quickly."

"I will, Sire. Hold a bed of justice."

"That is another embarrassment," said his Majesty; "a bed of justice, remember, Madame, is almost a revolution."

"It is simply telling these rebellious subjects that you are the master. You know, Sire, that when the king proclaims his will in this manner, he alone has a right to speak; no one answers. You say to them, 'I will,' and they bow their assent."

"The fact is," said the Comtesse Dubarry, "the idea is a magnificent one."

"Magnificent it may be, but not good," replied Louis.

"But what a noble spectacle!" resumed Madame Dubarry, with warmth: "the procession, the nobles, the peers, the entire military staff of the king! Then the immense crowd of people; then the bed of justice, composed of five cushions embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lys. It would be a splendid ceremony!"

"You think so?" said the king, rather shaken in his resolution.

"Then the king's magnificent dress, — the cloak lined with ermine, the diamonds in the crown, the golden sceptre, — all the splendor which so well suits an august and noble countenance! Oh, how handsome you would look, Sire!"

"It is a long time since we had a bed of justice," said Louis, with affected carelessness.

"Not since your childhood, Sire," said Madame de Béarn. "The remembrance of your brilliant beauty on that occasion has remained engraven on the hearts of all."

"And then," added Madame Dubarry, "there would be an excellent opportunity for the chancellor to display his keen and concise eloquence, — to crush these people with his truth, dignity, and power."

"I must wait for the parliament's next wrong-doing," said Louis; "then I shall see."

"What can you wait for, Sire, more outrageous than what they have just committed?"

"Why, what have they done?"

"Do you not know?"

"They have teased Monsieur d'Aiguillon a little, but that is not a hanging offence; although," said the king, looking at Madame Dubarry, "although this dear duke is a friend of mine. Besides, if the parliament has teased the duke a little, I have punished them for their ill-nature by my decree of yesterday or the day before, — I do not remember which. We are now even."

"Well, Sire," said Madame Dubarry, with warmth, "Madame de Béarn has just informed us that this morning these black-gowned gentlemen have taken the start of you."

"How so?" said the king, frowning.

"Speak, Madame; the king permits it," said the favorite.

"Sire, the councillors have determined not to hold a court of parliament until your Majesty yields to their wishes."

"What say you?" said the king. "You mistake, Madame; that would be an act of rebellion, and my parliament dares not revolt, I hope."

"Sire, I assure you — "

"Oh! Madame, it is a mere rumor."

"Will your Majesty deign to hear me?"

"Speak, Countess."

"Well, my attorney has this morning returned me all the papers relating to my lawsuit. He can no longer plead, since they will no longer judge."

"Mere reports, I tell you, — rumors, bugbears;" but

while he spoke, the king paced up and down the boudoir in agitation.

"Sire, will your Majesty believe Monsieur de Richelieu, if you will not believe me? In my presence his papers were returned to him also, and the duke left the house in a rage."

"Some one is tapping at the door," said the king, to change the conversation.

"It is Zamore, Sire."

Zamore entered. "A letter, Mistress," said he.

"With your permission, Sire," said the countess. "Ah! good heavens!" exclaimed she, suddenly.

"What is the matter?"

"From the chancellor, Sire. Monsieur de Maupeou, knowing that your Majesty has deigned to pay me a visit, solicits my intervention to obtain an audience for him."

"What is in the wind now?"

"Show the chancellor in," said Madame Dubarry. The Comtesse de Béarn rose to take her leave.

"You need not go, Madame," said the king. "Good-day, Monsieur de Maupeou. What news?"

"Sire," said the chancellor, bowing, "the parliament embarrassed you; you have no longer a parliament."

"How so? Are they all dead? Have they taken arsenic?"

"Would to Heaven they had! No, Sire, they live; but they will not sit any longer, and have sent in their resignations. I have just received them in a mass."

"The councillors?"

"No, Sire, the resignations."

"I told you, Sire, that it was a serious matter," said the countess, in a low voice.

"Most serious," replied Louis, impatiently. "Well, chancellor, what have you done?"

"Sire, I have come to receive your Majesty's orders."

"We will exile these people, Maupeou."

"Sire, they will not judge any better in exile."

"We will command them to judge. Bah! injunctions are out of date, — letters of commandment likewise — "

"Ah! Sire, this time you must be determined."

"Yes, you are right."

"Courage!" said Madame de Béarn, aside to the countess.

"And act the master, after having too often acted only the father," said the countess.

"Chancellor," said the king, slowly, "I know only one remedy; it is serious, but efficacious. I will hold a bed of justice; these people must be made to tremble once for all."

"Ah! Sire," exclaimed the chancellor, "that is well spoken; they must bend, or break!"

"Madame," added the king, addressing Madame de Béarn, "if your suit be not judged, you see it will not be my fault."

"Sire, you are the greatest monarch in the world!"

"Oh! yes," echoed the countess, Chon, and the chancellor.

"The world does not say so, however," murmured the king.

END OF VOL. II.

THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

THE MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN

Volume One

The Marie Antoinette Romances

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MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BED OF JUSTICE.

This famous bed of justice took place with all the ceremonies which royal pride, on the one hand, and the intrigues which drove the master to this step, on the other, demanded.

The household of the king was placed under arms; an abundance of short-robed archers, soldiers of the watch, and police-officers were commissioned to protect the lord chancellor, who, like a general upon the decisive day, would have to expose his sacred person to secure the success of the enterprise.

The chancellor was execrated. Of this he was well aware, and if his vanity made him fear assassination, those better acquainted with the sentiments of the public toward him could, without exaggerating, have predicted some downright insults, or at least hootings, as likely to fall to his share. The same perquisites were promised to Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was equally offensive to the popular instincts, improved perhaps by parliamentary debates. The king affected serenity, yet he was not easy.

But he donned with great satisfaction his magnificent robes, and straightway came to the conclusion that nothing protects so surely as majesty. He might have added, "and the love of the people;" but this phrase had been so frequently repeated to him at Metz during his illness that he imagined he could not repeat it now without being charged with plagiarism.

The dauphiness, for whom the sight was a new one, and who at heart perhaps wished to see it, assumed her plaintive look, and wore it during the drive to the ceremony, — which disposed public opinion very favorably toward her.

Madame Dubarry was brave. She possessed that confidence which is given by youth and beauty. Besides, had not everything been said that could be said of her? What could be added now? She appeared, radiant with beauty, as if the splendor of her august lover had been reflected upon her.

The Duc d'Aiguillon marched boldly among the peers who preceded the king. His noble and impressive countenance betrayed no symptoms of grief or discontent, nor did he bear himself triumphantly. To see him walking thus, none would have suspected that the struggle of the king with his parliament was on his account. Fingers were pointed at him in the crowd, terrible glances were darted at him from the parliament, and that was all.

The great hall of the Palais was crammed to overflowing; actors and spectators together made a total of more than three thousand persons.

Outside the Palais the crowd, kept in order by the staves of the officers and the bâtons and maces of the archers, gave token of its presence only by that indescribable hum which is not a voice, which articulates nothing,

but which nevertheless makes itself heard, and which may justly be called the utterance of the people.

The same silence reigned in the great hall when, the sound of footsteps having ceased, and every one having taken his place, the king, majestic and gloomy, had commanded his chancellor to begin the proceedings.

The parliament knew beforehand what the bed of justice held in reserve for them. They fully understood why they had been convoked. They were to hear the unmitigated expression of the royal will; but they knew the patience, not to say the timidity, of the king, and if they feared, it was rather for the consequences of the bed of justice than for the sitting itself.

The chancellor began his address. He was an excellent orator; his exordium was clever, and the amateurs of a demonstrative style found ample scope for study in it. As it proceeded, however, the speech degenerated into a tirade so severe that all the nobility had a smile on their lips, while the parliament felt very ill at ease.

The king, by the mouth of his chancellor, ordered them to cut short the affairs of Brittany, of which he had had enough. He commanded them to be reconciled to the Duc d'Aiguillon, whose services pleased him, and not to interrupt the service of justice, so that everything might go on as in that happy period of the golden age when the flowing streams murmured judicial or argumentative discourses, when the trees were loaded with bags of law papers placed within reach of the advocates and attorneys, who had the right to pluck them as fruit belonging to them.

These flippancies did not reconcile the parliament to the lord chancellor nor to the Duc d'Aiguillon. But the speech had been made, and all reply was impossible.

The members of the parliament, although scarcely able

to contain their vexation, assumed, with that admirable unity which gives so much strength to constituted bodies, a calm and indifferent demeanor, which highly displeased his Majesty and the aristocratic world upon the platform.

The dauphiness turned pale with anger. For the first time she found herself in the presence of popular resistance, and she coldly calculated its power. She had come to this bed of justice with the intention of opposing, at least by her look, the resolution which was about to be adopted there; but gradually she felt herself drawn to make common cause with those of her own caste and race, — so that in proportion as the chancellor attacked the parliament more severely, this proud young creature was indignant to find his words so weak. She fancied she could have found words which would have made this assembly start like a troop of oxen under the goad. In short, she found the chancellor too feeble, and the parliament too strong.

Louis XV. was a physiognomist, as all selfish people would be if they were not sometimes idle as well as selfish. He cast a glance around to observe the effect of his will, expressed in words which he thought tolerably eloquent. The paleness and the compressed lips of the dauphiness showed him what was passing in her mind. As a counterpoise, he turned to look at Madame Dubarry; but instead of the victorious smile he hoped to find there, he saw only an anxious desire to attract the king's looks, as if to judge what he thought.

Nothing intimidates weak minds so much as being forestalled by the wills and minds of others. If they find themselves observed by those who have already taken a resolution, they conclude that they have not done enough; that they are about to be, or have been, ridiculous; that the spectators have a right to expect more than has been done. Then they pass to extremes; the timid man

becomes furious, and a sudden manifestation betrays the effect of this reaction produced by fear upon a fear less powerful.

The king had no need to add a single word to those his chancellor had already spoken; it was not according to etiquette, it was not even necessary. But on this occasion he was possessed of the babbling demon, and making a sign with his hand, he signified that he intended to speak.

Immediately attention was changed to stupor. The members of parliament were all seen to wheel round toward the bed of justice with the precision of a file of soldiers upon drill. The princes, peers, and military felt uneasy. It was not impossible that after so many excellent things had been said, his most Christian Majesty might add something which, to say the least, would be quite useless. Their respect prevented them from giving any other description to the words which might fall from the royal lips.

Monsieur de Richelieu, who had affected to keep aloof from his nephew, now sought communication with him by a glance of the eye and an expression of mysterious intelligence. But his glance, which was becoming rebellious, met the penetrating eye of Madame Dubarry. Richelieu possessed, as no one else did, the precious power of transition; he passed easily from the satirical to the admiring expression, and chose the beautiful countess as the point of intersection between these two extremes. He addressed a smile of gallantry and congratulation, therefore, to Madame Dubarry; but the latter was not duped by it, especially since the old marshal, who had given signs of an understanding with the parliament and the opposing princes, was obliged to continue them, that he might not appear what he really was.

What sights there are in a drop of water, — that ocean for an observer! What centuries in a second, — that indescribable eternity! All we have related took place while Louis was preparing to speak and was opening his lips. "You have heard," said he, in a firm voice, "what my chancellor has told you of my wishes. Prepare, therefore, to execute them; for such are my intentions, and I shall never change!"

Louis XV. uttered these last words with the noise and force of a thunderbolt. The whole assembly was literally thunderstruck. A shudder passed over the parliament, and was quickly communicated like an electric spark to the crowd. A like thrill was felt by the partisans of the king. Surprise and admiration were on every face and in every heart. The dauphiness involuntarily thanked the king by a lightning glance from her beautiful eyes. Madame Dubarry, electrified, could not refrain from rising, and would have clapped her hands, but for the very natural fear of being stoned as she left the house, or of receiving hundreds of couplets the next morning, each more odious than the others.

Louis could from this moment enjoy his triumph. The parliament bent low, still with the same unanimity. The king rose from his embroidered cushions. Instantly the captain of the guards, the commandant of the household, and all the gentlemen of the king's suite, rose. Drums beat and trumpets sounded outside. The almost silent stir of the people on the arrival was now changed into a deep murmur, which died away in the distance, repressed by the soldiers and archers.

The king proudly crossed the hall, without seeing anything on his way but humbled foreheads. The Duc d'Aiguillon still preceded his Majesty, without abusing his triumph.

The chancellor, having reached the door of the hall, saw the immense crowd of people extending on all sides, and heard their execrations, which reached his ears notwithstanding the distance. He trembled, and said to the archers: "Close around me."

Monsieur de Richelieu bowed low to the Duc d'Aiguillon as he passed, and whispered, "These heads are very low, Duke; some day or other they will rise devilishly high. Take care!"

Madame Dubarry was passing at the moment, accompanied by her brother, the Marquise de Mirepoix, and several ladies. She heard the marshal's words; and as she was more inclined to repartee than malice, she said: "Oh! there is nothing to fear, Marshal; did you not hear his Majesty's words? The king, I think, said he would never change."

"Terrible words indeed, Madame," replied the duke, with a smile; "but happily for us, these poor parliament men did not remark that while saying he would never change, the king looked at you;" and he finished this compliment with one of those inimitable bows which are no longer seen, even upon the stage.

Madame Dubarry was a woman, and by no means a politician. She saw only the compliment, where D'Aiguillon detected plainly the epigram and the threat. Therefore she replied with a smile, while her ally turned pale and bit his lips with vexation upon seeing that the marshal's resentment was still unappeased.

The effect of the bed of justice was for the moment favorable to the royal cause. But it frequently happens that a great blow only stuns, and it is remarked that after the stunning effect has passed away, the blood circulates with more vigor and purity than before. Such at least were the reflections made by a little group of plainly

dressed persons who were stationed as spectators at the corner of the Quai-aux-Fleurs and the Rue de la Barillerie, on seeing the king, attended by his brilliant cortége, leave the hall. They were three in number. Chance had brought them together at this corner, and there they seemed to study with interest the impressions of the crowd. Without previous acquaintance with one another, they had been placed in sympathy by the exchange of a few words, and had discussed the sitting even before it was over.

"These passions are well ripened," said one of them, an old man with bright eyes, and a mild and honest expression. "A bed of justice is a great work."

"Yes," replied a young man, smiling bitterly; "yes, if the work realize the title."

"Monsieur," replied the old man, turning round, "I think I should know you; I fancy I have seen you before."

"On the night of the 30th of May. You are not mistaken, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Oh! you are that young surgeon, — my countryman, Monsieur Marat!"

"Yes, Monsieur, at your service."

The two men exchanged salutations. The third had not yet spoken. He was also young, eminently handsome, and aristocratic in his appearance, and during the whole ceremony had unceasingly observed the crowd. The young surgeon moved away the first, and plunged into the densest masses of the people, who, less grateful than Rousseau, had already forgotten him, but whose memory he expected some day to revive.

The other young man waited until he was gone; and then, addressing Rousseau, "Monsieur," said he, "you do not go."

"Oh! I am too old to venture into such a mob."

"In that case," said the unknown, lowering his voice, "I will see you again this evening in the Rue Plastrière, Monsieur Rousseau, — do not fail."

The philosopher started as if a ghost had risen before him. His complexion, always pale, became livid. He made an effort to reply to this strange appeal, but the man had already disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WORDS OF THE UNKNOWN UPON J. J. ROUSSEAU.

On hearing these singular words spoken by a man whom he did not know, Rousseau, trembling and unhappy, plunged into the crowd; and without remembering that he was old and naturally timid, elbowed his way through it. He soon reached the bridge of Notre-Dame; then, still plunged in his revery, and muttering to himself, he crossed the quarter of La Grève, taking the shortest way to his own dwelling.

"So," said he to himself, "this secret, which the initiated guard at the peril of their lives, is in possession of the first comer. This is what mysterious associations gain by passing through the popular sieve. A man recognizes me who knows that I shall be his associate, perhaps his accomplice, yonder. Such a state of things is absurd and intolerable;" and while he spoke, Rousseau walked forward quickly, — he, usually so cautious, especially since his accident in the Rue Ménilmontant.

"Thus," continued the philosopher, "I must wish, forsooth, to sound to the bottom these plans of human regeneration which some spirits who boast of the title of 'illuminati' propose to carry out. I was foolish enough to imagine that any good ideas could come from Germany, — that land of beer and fog, — and may have compromised my name by joining it to those of fools or plotters, whom it will serve as a cloak to shelter their folly.

Oh, no! it shall not be thus. No; a flash of lightning has shown me the abyss, and I will not rashly throw myself into it."

Rousseau paused to take breath, resting upon his cane, and standing motionless for a moment. "Yet it was a beautiful chimera," he continued. "Liberty in the midst of slavery, — the future conquered without noise and struggle, — the snare mysteriously woven while earth's tyrants slept. It was too beautiful! I was a fool to believe it! I will not be the sport of fears, of suspicions, of shadows, which are unworthy of a free spirit and an independent body."

He had thus far communed with himself, and was continuing his progress, when the sight of some of Monsieur de Sartines' agents gazing round with their ubiquitous eyes frightened the free spirit, and gave such an impulse to the independent body that he plunged into the deepest shadows of the pillars near which he was walking. From these pillars it was not far to the Rue Plastrière. Rousseau passed rapidly over that distance, ascended the stairs to his domicile, breathing like a stag pursued by the hunters, and sank upon a chair, unable to utter a word in answer to all Thérèse's questions.

At last he recovered sufficiently to account for his emotion; it was the walk, the heat, the news of the king's angry remarks at the bed of justice, the commotion caused by the popular terror, — a sort of panic, in short, which had spread among all who witnessed what had happened.

Thérèse grumblingly replied that all that was no reason for allowing the dinner to cool; and, moreover, that a man ought not to be such a cowardly weakling as to be frightened at the least noise.

Rousseau could make no reply to this last argument, which he himself had so frequently stated in other terms.

Thérèse added that these philosophers, these imaginative people, were all the same ; that they always talked very grandly in their writings, they said that they feared nothing ; that God and man were very little to them : but at the slightest barking of the smallest poodle, they cried, "Help!" — at the least feverishness they exclaimed, "My God! I am dead."

This was one of Thérèse's favorite themes, that which most excited her eloquence, and to which Rousseau, who was naturally timid, found it most difficult to reply. Rousseau, therefore, pursued his own thoughts to the sound of this discordant music, — thoughts which were certainly as valuable as Thérèse's, notwithstanding the abuse the latter showered so plentifully on him.

"Happiness," said he, "is composed of perfume and noise; now, noise and perfume are conventional things. Who can prove that the onion smells less sweet than the rose, or that the peacock sings less melodiously than the nightingale?" after which axiom, which might pass for an excellent paradox, they sat down to table.

After dinner Rousseau did not, as usual, sit down to his harpsichord. He paced up and down the apartment, and stopped a hundred times to look out of the window, apparently studying the physiognomy of the Rue Plastrière. Thérèse was forthwith seized with one of those fits of jealousy which peevish people — that is to say, the least really jealous people in the world — often indulge in for the sake of opposition. For if there is a disagreeable affectation in the world, it is the affectation of a fault ; the affectation of virtue may be tolerated.

Thérèse, who held Rousseau's age, complexion, mind, and manners in the utmost contempt ; who thought him old, sickly, and ugly, — did not fear that any one would run off with her husband ; she never dreamed that other

women might look upon him with other feelings than her own. But as the pains inflicted by jealousy constitute woman's favorite mode of punishment, Thérèse sometimes indulged herself in the pleasure of administering them. Seeing Rousseau, therefore, approach the window so frequently, and observing his dreaming and restless air, she said: "Very good! I understand your agitation; you have just left some one."

Rousseau turned to her with a startled look, which served as an additional proof of the truth of her suspicions.

"Some one you wish to see again?" she continued.

"What do you say?" asked Rousseau.

"Yes, we make assignations, it seems."

"Oh!" said Rousseau, comprehending that Thérèse was jealous, — "an assignation! You are mad, Thérèse!"

"I know perfectly well that it would be madness in you," said she; "but you are capable of any folly. Go, go, with your papier-mâché complexion, your palpitations, and your coughs, — go, and make conquests! It is one way of getting on in the world!"

"But, Thérèse, you know there is not a word of truth in what you are saying!" said Rousseau, angrily. "Let me think in peace."

"You are a libertine!" said Thérèse, with the utmost seriousness.

Rousseau reddened as if she had hit the truth, or as if he had received a compliment. Thérèse forthwith thought herself justified in putting on a terrible countenance, turning the whole household upside down, slamming the doors violently, and playing with Rousseau's tranquillity as children play with those metal rings which they shut up in a box and shake to make a noise.

Rousseau took refuge in his cabinet; this uproar had

rather confused his ideas. He reflected that there would doubtless be some danger in not being present at the mysterious ceremony of which the stranger had spoken at the corner of the Quai. "If there are punishments for traitors, there will also be punishments for the lukewarm or careless," thought he. "Now I have always remarked that great dangers mean in reality nothing, just like loud threats. The cases in which either are productive of any result are extremely rare; but petty revenges, underhand attacks, mischievous tricks, and other such small coin, — these we must be on our guard against. Some day the masonic brothers may repay my contempt by stretching a string across my staircase; I shall stumble over it and break a leg, or the six or eight teeth I have left. Or else they will have a stone ready to fall upon my head when I am passing under a scaffolding; or, better still, there may be some pamphleteer belonging to the fraternity living quite near me, upon the same floor, perhaps, looking from his windows into my room. That is not impossible, since the reunions take place even in the Rue Plastrière. Well, this wretch will write stupid lampoons on me, which will make me ridiculous all over Paris. Have I not enemies everywhere?"

A moment afterward Rousseau's thoughts took a different turn. "Well," said he to himself, "but where is courage? Where is honor? Shall I be afraid of myself? Shall I see in my glass only the face of a coward, — a slave? No, it shall not be so. Though the whole world should combine to ruin me, though the houses of the street should fall upon me, I will go. What pitiable reasoning does fear produce! Since I met this man I have been continually turning in a circle of absurdities. I doubt every one, even myself! That is not logical. I know myself, I am not an enthusiast; if I thought I saw

wonders in this projected association, it is because there are wonders in it. Who will say I may not be the regenerator of the human race, — I, who am sought after, — I, whom the mysterious agents of an unlimited power have come to consult on the faith set forth in my works? Shall I recoil when the time has come to follow up my work, to substitute practice for theory?"

Rousseau became animated. "What can be more beautiful! Ages roll on; the people rise out of their brutishness; step follows step in the darkness, toward the hand stretched out in the shadows; the immense pyramid is raised, upon the summit of which, as its crowning glory, future ages shall place the bust of Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, who risked his liberty, his life, that he might act as he had spoken, — that he might be faithful to his motto, 'Vitam impendere vero.'"

Thereupon Rousseau, in a fit of enthusiasm, seated himself at his harpsichord, and exalted his imagination by the loudest, the most sonorous, and the most warlike melodies he could call forth from its sounding cavity.

Night closed in. Thérèse, wearied with her vain endeavors to torment her captive, had fallen asleep upon her chair. Rousseau, with beating heart, took his new coat, as if to go out on a pleasure excursion, glanced for a moment in the glass at the play of his black eyes, and was charmed to find that they were sparkling and expressive.

He grasped his knotted stick in his hand, and slipped out of the room without awakening Thérèse. But when he arrived at the foot of the stairs, and had drawn back the bolt of the street-door, Rousseau paused and looked out, to assure himself as to the condition of the neighborhood.

No carriage was passing. The street, as usual, was full of idlers gazing at each other, as they do at this day, while

many stopped at the shop-windows to ogle the pretty girls; a new-comer would therefore be quite unnoticed in such a crowd. Rousseau plunged into it; he had not far to go. A ballad-singer, with a cracked violin, was stationed before the door which had been pointed out to him. This music, to which every true Parisian's ear is extremely sensitive, filled the street with echoes which repeated the last bars of the air sung by the violin or by the singer himself. Nothing could be more unfavorable, therefore, to the free passage along the street than the crowd gathered at this spot, and the passers-by were obliged to turn either to the right or left of the group. Those who, going in one direction, turned to the left, took the centre of the street; those to the right, brushed along the side of the house indicated, and *vice versa* with those going in the other direction.

Rousseau remarked that several of these passers-by disappeared on the way, as if they had fallen into some trap. He concluded that these people had come with the same purpose as himself, and determined to imitate their manœuvre. It was not difficult to accomplish. Having stationed himself in the rear of the assembly of listeners, as if to join their number, he watched the first person whom he saw entering the open alley. More timid than they, probably because he had more to risk, he waited until a particularly favorable opportunity should present itself.

He did not wait long. A cabriolet which drove along the street divided the circle, and caused the two hemispheres to fall back upon the houses on either side. Rousseau thus found himself driven to the very entrance of the passage; he had only to walk on. He observed that all the idlers were looking at the cabriolet, and had turned their backs on the house; he took advantage of this circumstance, and disappeared in the dark passage.

After advancing a few steps he perceived a lamp, beneath which a man was seated quietly, like a stall-keeper after the day's business was over, reading, or seeming to read, a newspaper. At the sound of Rousseau's footsteps this man raised his head and placed his finger upon his breast, upon which the lamp threw a strong light. Rousseau replied to this symbolic gesture by raising his finger to his lips.

The man then immediately rose, and pushing open a door at his right hand, so artificially concealed in the wooden panel, of which it formed a part, as to be wholly invisible, he showed Rousseau a very steep staircase which descended underground. Rousseau entered, and the door closed quickly but noiselessly after him.

The philosopher descended the steps slowly, assisted by his cane. He thought it rather disrespectful that the brothers should cause him, at this his first interview, to run the risk of breaking his neck or his legs. But the stair, if steep, was not long. Rousseau counted seventeen steps, and then felt as if suddenly plunged into a highly heated atmosphere.

This moist heat proceeded from the breath of a considerable number of men who were assembled in the low hall. Rousseau remarked that the walls were tapestried with red and white drapery, on which figures of various implements of labor, rather symbolic, doubtless, than real, were depicted. A single lamp hung from the vaulted ceiling, and threw a gloomy light upon the faces of those present, who were conversing with each other on the wooden benches, and who had the appearance of honest and respectable citizens.

The floor was neither polished nor carpeted, but was covered with a thick mat of plaited rushes, which deadened the sound of the footsteps. Rousseau's entrance

therefore produced no sensation; no one seemed to have remarked it.

Five minutes previously Rousseau had longed for nothing so much as such an entrance; and yet when he had entered, he felt annoyed that he had succeeded so well. He saw an unoccupied place on one of the back benches, and installed himself as modestly as possible on this seat, behind all the others. He counted thirty-three heads in the assembly. A desk, placed upon a platform, seemed to wait for a president.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE IN THE RUE PLASTRIÈRE.

ROUSSEAU remarked that the conversation of those present was very cautious and reserved. Many did not open their lips, and scarcely three or four couples exchanged a few words. Those who did not speak endeavored even to conceal their faces, which was not difficult, thanks to the great body of shadow cast by the platform of the expected president. The refuge of these last, who seemed to be the timid individuals of the assembly, was behind this platform. But in return, two or three members of the company gave themselves a great deal of trouble to recognize their colleagues. They came and went, talked among themselves, and frequently disappeared through a door before which was drawn a black curtain, ornamented with red flames.

In a short time a bell was rung. A man immediately rose from the end of the bench upon which he was seated, and where he had been associated with the other freemasons, and took his place upon the platform. After making signs with the hands and fingers, which were repeated by all those present, and adding a last sign more explicit than the others, he declared the sitting opened.

This man was entirely unknown to Rousseau. Beneath the exterior of a working-man in easy circumstances he concealed great presence of mind, aided by an elocution as flowing as could have been wished for in an orator. His speech was brief, and to the point. He declared that

the lodge had been assembled to proceed to the election of a new brother.

"You will not be surprised," said he, "that we have assembled you in a place where the usual ceremonies cannot be performed. These ceremonies have seemed useless to the chiefs; the brother whom we are to receive to-day is one of the lights of contemporary philosophy, — a thoughtful spirit, who will be devoted to us from conviction, not from fear. One who has discovered all the mysteries of nature and of the human heart cannot be treated in the same manner as the simple mortal from whom we demand the help of his arm, his will, and his gold. That we may have the co-operation of his distinguished mind, of his honest and energetic character, his promise and his assent are sufficient."

The speaker, when he had concluded, looked round to mark the effect of his words. Upon Rousseau the effect had been magical; the Genevese philosopher was acquainted with the preparatory mysteries of freemasonry, and looked upon them with the repugnance natural to enlightened minds. The concessions, absurd because they were useless, which the chiefs required from the candidates, that they might simulate fear when every one knew there was nothing to fear, seemed to him to be the acme of puerility and senseless superstition.

Besides this, the timid philosopher, an enemy to all personal exhibitions and manifestations, would have felt most unhappy had he been obliged to serve as a spectacle for people whom he did not know, and who would have certainly played their jokes upon him with more or less good faith. That these ceremonies should in his case be omitted was therefore more than a satisfaction to him. He knew the strictness with which equality was enforced by the masonic principles; therefore an exception in his

favor constituted a triumph. He was preparing to say some words in reply to the gracious address of the president, when a voice was heard among the audience.

"At least," said this voice, which was sharp and discordant, "since you think yourselves obliged to treat in this princely fashion a man like ourselves, since you dispense in his case with physical pains, as if the pursuit of liberty through bodily suffering were not one of our symbols, we hope you will not confer a precious title upon an unknown person without having questioned him according to the usual ritual, and without having received his profession of faith."

Rousseau turned round to discover the features of the aggressive person who so rudely jostled his triumphant car, and with the greatest surprise recognized the young surgeon whom he had that morning met upon the Quai-aux-Fleurs. A conviction of his own honesty of purpose, perhaps also a feeling of disdain for the "precious title," prevented him from replying.

"You have heard?" said the president, addressing Rousseau.

"Perfectly," replied the philosopher, who trembled slightly at the sound of his voice as it echoed from the vaulted roof of the dark hall, "and I am the more surprised at the interpellation when I see from whom it proceeds. What! a man whose profession it is to combat what is called physical suffering, and to assist his brethren, who are common men as well as freemasons, preaches the utility of physical suffering! He chooses a singular path through which to lead the creature to happiness, the sick to health."

"We do not here speak of this or that person," replied the young man, warmly; "I am supposed to be unknown to the candidate, and he to me. I am merely the utterer of an abstract truth, and I assert that the chief has done

wrong in making an exception in favor of any one. I do not recognize in him," pointing to Rousseau, "the philosopher, and he must not recognize the surgeon in me. We shall perhaps walk side by side through life, without a look or gesture betraying our intimacy, which nevertheless, thanks to the laws of the association, is more binding than all vulgar friendships. I repeat, therefore, that if it has been thought well to spare this candidate the usual trials, he ought at least to have the usual questions put to him."

Rousseau made no reply. The president saw depicted on his features disgust at this discussion, and regret at having engaged in the enterprise. "Brother," said he, authoritatively to the young man, "you will please be silent when the chief speaks, and do not venture on light grounds to blame his actions, which are sovereign here."

"I have a right to speak," replied the young man, more gently.

"To speak, yes; but not to blame. The brother who is about to enter our association is so well known that we have no wish to employ in our masonic relations with him a ridiculous and useless mystery. All the brothers here present know his name, and his name itself is a perfect guarantee. But as he himself, I am certain, loves equality, I request him to answer the question which I shall put to him merely for form: 'What do you seek in this association?'"

Rousseau made two steps forward in advance of the crowd, and his dreamy and melancholy eye wandered over the assembly. "I seek," said he, "that which I do not find, — truths, not sophisms. Why should you surround me with poniards which do not wound, with poisons which are only clear water, and with traps under which mattresses are spread! I know the extent of human endurance. I know the vigor of my physical frame. If you

were to destroy it, it would not be worth your while to elect me a brother, for when dead I could be of no use to you. Therefore you do not wish to kill me, still less to wound me; and all the doctors in the world would not make me approve of an initiation in the course of which my limbs had been broken. I have served a longer apprenticeship to pain than any of you; I have sounded the body, and probed even to the soul. If I consented to come among you when I was *solicited*," — and he laid particular emphasis on the word, — "it was because I thought I might be useful. I give, therefore; I do not receive. Alas! before you could do anything to defend me, before you could restore me to liberty were I imprisoned, before you could give me bread if I were starving, or consolation if I were afflicted, — before, I repeat, you could do anything, the brother whom you admit to-day, if this gentleman," turning to Marat, "permits it, — this brother will have paid the last tribute of nature; for progress is halting, light is slow, and from the grave into which he will be thrown, none of you can raise him."

"You are mistaken, illustrious brother," said a mild and penetrating voice, which charmed Rousseau's ear; "there is more than you think in the association into which you are about to enter, — there is the whole future destiny of the world. The future, you are aware, is hope, is science, — the future is God, who will give his light to the world, since he has promised to give it; for God cannot lie."

Astonished at this elevated language, Rousseau looked around and recognized the young man who had made the appointment with him in the morning at the bed of justice. This man, who was dressed in black with great neatness, and was characterized especially by a marked air of distinction, was leaning against the side of the platform, and

his face, illumined by the lamp, shone in all its beauty, grace, and expressiveness.

"Ah!" said Rousseau, "science, — the bottomless abyss! You speak to me of science, consolation, futurity, hope; another speaks of matter, of rigor, and of violence. Whom shall I believe? Shall it be, then, in this assembly of brothers as it is among the devouring wolves of the world which stirs above us? Wolves and sheep! Listen to my profession of faith, since you have not read it in my books."

"Your books!" exclaimed Marat. "They are sublime, — I confess it; but they are Utopias. You are useful in the same point of view as Pythagoras, Solon, and Cicero the sophist. You point out the good, but it is an artificial, unsubstantial, unattainable good. You are like one who would feed a hungry crowd with air-bubbles, more or less illumined by the sun."

"Have you ever seen," said Rousseau, frowning, "great commotions of nature take place without preparation? Have you seen the birth of a man, — that common and yet sublime event? Have you not seen him collect substance and life in the womb of his mother for nine months? Ah! you wish me to regenerate the world with actions. That is not to regenerate, Monsieur, it is to revolutionize!"

"Then," retorted the young surgeon, violently, "you do not wish for independence; you do not wish for liberty!"

"On the contrary," replied Rousseau; "independence is my idol, liberty is my goddess. But I wish for a mild and radiant liberty, — a liberty which warms and vivifies. I wish for an equality which will connect men by ties of friendship, not by fear. I wish for education, for the instruction of each element of the social body, as the mechanic wishes for harmonious movement, as the cabinet-maker wishes for perfect exactness, for the closest fitting,

in each piece of his work. I repeat it, I wish that for which I have written, — progress, concord, devotion."

A smile of disdain flitted over Marat's lips. "Yes," he said, "rivulets of milk and honey, Elysian fields like Virgil's, poetic dreams which philosophy would make a reality."

Rousseau made no reply. It seemed to him too hard that he should have to defend his moderation, — he whom all Europe called a violent innovator.

He took his seat in silence, after having satisfied his ingenuous and timid mind by appealing with a glance to the person who had just before defended him, and obtaining his tacit approbation.

The president rose. "You have all heard?" said he.

"Yes," replied the entire assembly.

"Does the candidate appear to you worthy of entering the association, and does he comprehend its duties?"

"Yes," replied the assembly again; but this time with a reserve which did not evince much unanimity.

"Take the oath," said the president to Rousseau.

"It would be disagreeable to me," said the philosopher, with some pride, "to displease any members of this association; and I must repeat the words I made use of just now, as they are the expression of my earnest conviction. If I were an orator, I would put them in a more eloquent manner; but my organ of speech is rebellious, and always betrays my thoughts when I ask it for an immediate translation. I wish to say that I can do more for the world and for you out of this assembly, than I could were I strictly to follow your usages. Leave me, therefore, to my work, to my weakness, to my loneliness. I have told you I am descending to the grave; grief, infirmity, and want hurry me on. You cannot delay this great work of nature. Abandon me; I am not made for the society of men, — I

hate and avoid them. Nevertheless, I serve them, because I am a man myself; and in serving them I fancy them better than they are. Now you have my whole thought; I shall not say another word."

"Then you refuse to take the oath?" said Marat, with some emotion.

"I refuse positively; I do not wish to join the association. I see too many convincing proofs to assure me that I should be useless to it."

"Brother," said the unknown personage with the conciliatory voice, — "allow me to call you so, for we are brothers, independently of all combinations of the human mind, — brother! do not give way to a very natural feeling of irritation; sacrifice your legitimate pride; do for us what is repulsive to yourself. Your advice, your ideas, your presence, are light to our paths. Do not plunge us in the twofold darkness of your absence and your refusal."

"You are in error," said Rousseau; "I take nothing from you, since I should never have given you more than I have given to the whole world, — to the first chance reader, to the first consulter of the journals. If you wish for the name and essence of Rousseau — "

"We do wish for them!" said several voices, politely.

"Then make a collection of my books; place them upon the table of your president; and when you are taking the opinions of the meeting, and my turn to give one comes, open my books, — you will find my counsel and my vote there."

Rousseau made a step toward the door.

"Stop one moment!" said the surgeon. "Mind is free, and that of the illustrious philosopher more than any other; but it would not be regular to have allowed a stranger even to enter our sanctuary, who, not being

bound by any tacit agreement, might, without dishonesty, reveal our mysteries."

Rousseau smiled compassionately. "You want an oath of secrecy?" said he.

"You have said it."

"I am ready."

"Be good enough to read the formula, venerable brother," said Marat.

The venerable brother read the following form of oath: "I swear, in the presence of the Eternal God, the Architect of the Universe, and before my superiors and the respectable assembly which surrounds me, never to reveal or to make known or write anything which has happened in my presence, under penalty, in case of indiscretion, of being punished according to the laws of the Great Founder, of my superiors, and the anger of my fathers."

Rousseau had already raised his hand to swear, when the unknown, who had followed the progress of the debate with a sort of authority which no one seemed to dispute, although he was not distinguished from the crowd, approached the president, and whispered some words in his ear.

"True," said the venerable chief; and he added: "You are a man, not a brother; you are a man of honor, placed toward us only in the position of a fellow-man. We here abjure, therefore, our distinguishing peculiarity, and ask from you merely your word of honor to forget what has passed between us."

"Like a dream of the morning, — I swear it upon my honor," said Rousseau, with emotion. With these words he retired, and many of the members followed him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REPORT.

When the members of the second and third orders had gone, seven of the associates remained. They were the leading members of the chapter. They recognized each other by means of signs which proved their initiation to a superior degree.

Their first care was to close the doors. Then their president made himself known by displaying a ring, on which were engraved the mysterious letters, L. P. D.[1]

This president was charged with the most important correspondence of the order. He was in communication with the six other chiefs, who dwelt in Switzerland, Russia, America, Sweden, Spain, and Italy. He brought with him some of the most important documents he had received from his colleagues, in order to communicate their contents to the superior circle of initiated brothers, who were above the others but beneath him. We have already recognized this chief; it was Balsamo.

The most important of the letters contained threatening intelligence. It was from Sweden, and had been written by Swedenborg. "Watch the South, brothers," it said; "under its burning rays has been hatched a traitor who will ruin you. Watch in Paris, brothers, — the traitor dwells there; he possesses the secrets of the order; a feeling of hatred urges him on. A murmuring voice, a rustling flight, whispers the denunciation in my ear. I see a ter-

[1] Lilia pedibus destrue.

rible vengeance coming, but perhaps it will be too late. In the mean time, brothers, watch! watch! A traitorous tongue, even though it be uninstructed, is sometimes sufficient to overthrow our most skilfully constructed plans."

The brothers looked at each other in mute surprise. The language of the fierce old sage, his prescience, which had acquired an imposing authority from many striking examples, contributed in no small degree to cast a gloom over the meeting at which Balsamo presided. Balsamo himself, who placed implicit faith in Swedenborg's second-sight, could not resist the serious and painful impression made on him by the reading of that letter. "Brothers," said he, "the inspired prophet is rarely deceived. Watch, then, as he bids you. You know now, as I do, that the struggle has begun. Let us not be conquered by these ridiculous enemies, whose power we sap in the utmost security. You must not forget that they have mercenary swords at their command, — powerful weapons in this world, among those who do not see beyond the limits of our terrestrial life. Brothers, let us distrust these hired traitors."

"These fears seem to me puerile," said a voice; "we gather strength daily, and we are directed by brilliant genius and powerful hands."

Balsamo bowed his thanks for the flattering eulogy.

"Yes, but as our illustrious president has said, treason creeps everywhere," replied a brother, who was no other than the surgeon Marat, promoted, notwithstanding his youth, to a superior grade, in virtue of which he now sat for the first time on a consulting committee. "Remember, brothers, that by doubling the bait, you may make a more important capture. If Monsieur de Sartines with a bag of crown-pieces can purchase the revelations of one of our obscurer brothers, with a million or with holding out

the hope of advancement, he may buy over one of our superiors. Now, with us, the obscurer brother knows nothing. At the most he is cognizant of the names of some of his colleagues, and these names signify nothing. Ours is an excellent constitution, but it is eminently aristocratic; the inferiors know nothing, can do nothing. They are called together to say or to hear trifles, and yet they contribute their time and their money to increase the solidity of our edifice. Reflect that the workman brings only the stone and the mortar; but without stone and mortar could you build the house? Now, the workman receives a very small salary, but I consider him equal to the architect who plans, creates, and superintends the whole work; and I consider him equal because he is a man, and in the eyes of a philosopher one man is worth as much as another, seeing that he bears his misfortunes and his fate equally, and because, even more than another man, he is exposed to the fall of a stone or the breaking of a scaffold."

"I must interrupt you, brother," said Balsamo. "You diverge from the question which alone ought to occupy our thoughts. Your failing, brother, is that you are overzealous, and prone to generalize discussions. Our business on the present occasion is not to decide whether our constitution be good or bad, but to uphold the integrity of that constitution in all its strength. If I wished, however, to discuss the point with you, I should answer, No; the instrument which receives the impulse is not equal to the creating genius; the workman is not equal to the architect; the arm is not equal to the brain."

"Suppose Monsieur de Sartines should seize one of our least important brethren," cried Marat, warmly, "would he not send him to rot in the Bastille equally with you or me?"

"Granted; but the misfortune in that case is for the individual only, not for the order, which with us should take precedence of all else. If, on the contrary, the chief is imprisoned, the whole conspiracy is at an end. When the general is absent, the army loses the battle. Therefore, brothers, watch over the safety of the chiefs!"

"Yes, but let them in return watch over ours."

"That is their duty."

"And let their faults be doubly punished."

"Again, brother, you wander from the constitution of the order. Have you forgotten that the oath which binds all the members of the association is the same, and threatens all with the same punishment?"

"The great ones always escape."

"That is not the opinion of the great themselves, brothers. Listen to the conclusion of the letter which one of the greatest among us, our prophet Swedenborg, has written. This is what he adds: 'The blow will come from one of the mighty ones, one of the mightiest of the order; or if it comes not directly from him, the fault will be traceable to him. Remember that fire and water may be accomplices; one gives light, the other revelation. Watch, brothers, over all and over each, watch!'"

"Then," said Marat, seizing upon those points in Balsamo's speech and Swedenborg's letter which suited his purpose, "let us repeat the oath which binds us together, and let us pledge ourselves to maintain it in its utmost vigor, whosoever he may be who shall betray us or be the cause of our betrayal."

Balsamo paused for a moment, and then, rising from his seat, he pronounced the consecrated words, with which our readers are already acquainted, in a slow, solemn, terrible voice:—

"In the name of the crucified Son, I swear to break all

the bonds of nature which unite me to father, mother, brother, sister, wife, relation, friend, mistress, king, benefactor, and to any being whatever to whom I have promised faith, obedience, gratitude, or service. I swear to reveal to the chief, whom I acknowledge according to the statutes of the order, all that I have seen or done, read or heard, learned or divined, and henceforward to search out and penetrate into that which may not openly present itself to my eyes. I will honor poison, steel, and fire as a means of ridding the world, by death or idiocy, of the enemies of truth and liberty. I subscribe to the law of silence. I consent to die, as if struck by lightning, on the day when I shall have merited this punishment, and I await, without murmuring, the knife which will reach me, in whatsoever part of the world I may be."

Then the seven men who composed this solemn assembly repeated the oath, word for word, standing, and with uncovered heads.

When the words of the oath had been repeated by all, "We are now guaranteed against treachery," said Balsamo; "let us no longer mingle extraneous matter with our discussion. I have to make my report to the committee of the principal events of the year. My summary of the affairs of France may have interest for enlightened and zealous minds like yours; I will begin with it.

"France is situated in the centre of Europe, as the heart in the centre of the body; it lives, and radiates life. It is in its palpitations that we must look for the cause of all the disorder in the general organization. I came to France, therefore, and approached Paris as a physician approaches the heart. I listened, I felt, I experimented. When I entered it a year ago, the monarchy harassed it; to-day, vices kill it. I found it necessary to hasten the effect of these fatal debauches, and therefore I assisted them.

"An obstacle was in my way; this obstacle was a man, not only the first, but the most powerful man in the State, next to the king. He was gifted with some of those qualities which please other men. He was too proud, it is true, but his pride was applied to his works. He knew how to lighten the subjection of the people by making them believe, even sometimes to see, that they were a portion of the State; and by consulting them on their grievances, he raised a standard around which the mass will always rally, — the spirit of nationality. He hated the English, the natural enemies of the French; he hated the favorite, the natural enemy of the working-classes. Now, if this man would have been a usurper, if he would have been one of us, if he would have trodden in our path and acted for our ends, — I would have assisted him; I would have kept him in power; I would have upheld him by the resources I am able to create for my protégés; for instead of patching up decayed royalty, he would have assisted us in overthrowing it on the appointed day. But he belonged to the aristocracy; he was born with a feeling of respect for that first rank to which he could not aspire, — for the monarchy, which he dared not attack; he served royalty while despising the king; he did worse, — he acted as a shield to this royalty against which our blows were directed. The parliament and the people, full of respect for this living dike which opposed itself to the encroachments of the royal prerogative, limited themselves to a moderate resistance, certain as they were of having in him a powerful assistant when the moment should arrive.

"I understood the position; I undertook Monsieur de Choiseul's fall. This laborious task, at which for ten years so much hatred and interest had labored in vain, I began and terminated in a few months, by means which it would be useless to reveal to you. By a secret, which

constitutes one of my powers, — a power the greater, because it will remain eternally hidden from the eyes of all, and will manifest itself only by its effects, — I overthrew and banished Monsieur de Choiseul, and attached to his overthrow a long train of regret, disappointment, lamentation, and anger. You see now that my labor bears its fruit; all France asks for Choiseul, and rises to demand him back, as orphans turn to heaven when God has taken away their earthly parents.

"The parliament employs the only right it possesses, — the right of inertia; it has ceased to act. In a well-organized body, such as a State of the first rank ought to be, the paralysis of any essential organ is fatal. Now, the parliament in the social, is what the stomach is in the human, body. When the parliament ceases to act, the people — the intestines of the State — can work no longer; and consequently must cease to pay, and the gold — that is, the blood — will be wanting.

"There will be a struggle, no doubt; but who can combat against the people? Not the army, that daughter of the people, which eats the bread of the laborer and drinks the wine of the vine-grower. There remain then the king's household, the privileged classes, the guards, the Swiss, the musketeers, — in all, scarce five or six thousand men. What can this handful of pygmies do when the nation shall rise like a giant?"

"Let them rise, then; let them rise!" cried several voices.

"Yes, yes, to the work!" exclaimed Marat.

"Young man, I have not yet consulted you," said Balsamo, coldly. "This sedition of the masses," continued he, "this revolt of the weak become strong by their number against the powerful single-handed, less thoughtful, less ripened, less experienced minds would arouse

immediately, and would succeed with a facility which terrifies me. But I have reflected and studied; I have mixed with the people, and assuming their dress, their perseverance, even their coarseness, I have viewed them so closely that I have made myself, as it were, one of themselves. I know them now; I cannot be deceived in them. They are strong, but ignorant; irritable, but not revengeful. In a word, they are not yet ripe for sedition such as I mean and wish for. They want the instruction which will make them see events in the double light of example and utility; they want the memory of their past experience.

"They resemble those daring young men whom I have seen in Germany, at the public festivals, eagerly climb a vessel's mast, at the top of which hung a ham and a silver cup. They started at first burning with eagerness, and mounted with surprising rapidity; but when they had almost reached the goal, when they had only to extend the arm to seize their prize, their strength abandoned them, and they slipped to the bottom amid the hootings of the crowd. The first time it happened as I have said; the second time they husbanded their strength and their breath, but taking more time, they failed by their slowness, as they had before failed from too great haste. At last, the third time, they took a middle course between precipitation and delay; and this time they succeeded. This is the plan I propose: efforts, never-ceasing efforts, which gradually approach the goal, until the day arrives when they will be crowned by infallible success."

Balsamo ceased, and looked around upon his audience, among whom the passions of youth and inexperience were boiling over. "Speak, brother," said he to Marat, who was more agitated than the others.

"I will be brief," said Marat. "Efforts soothe the

people when they do not discourage them. Efforts! that is the theory of Monsieur Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, a great poet, but a slow and timid genius, — a useless citizen, whom Plato would have driven from his republic! Wait! Ever wait! Since the emancipation of the commons, since the revolt of the *maillotins*, — for seven centuries we have waited! Count the generations which have died in the mean time, and then dare to pronounce the fatal word 'wait' as your motto of the future! Monsieur Rousseau speaks to us of opposition as it was practised in the reign of the Grand Monarque, as Molière practised it in his comedies, Boileau in his satires, and La Fontaine in his fables, — in the society of marchionesses and at the feet of kings. Poor and feeble opposition, which has not advanced the cause of humanity one jot! Lisping children recite these veiled theories without understanding them, and go to sleep while they recite. Rabelais also was a politician in your sense of the word; but with such political views people laugh, and correct nothing. Have you seen one single abuse redressed for the last three hundred years? Enough of poets and theorists! Let us have deeds, not words. We have given France up to the care of physicians for three hundred years, and it is time now that surgery should enter in its turn, scalpel and saw in hand. Society is gangrened; let us stop the gangrene with the steel. He may wait who rises from his table to recline upon a couch of roses, from which the ruffled leaves are blown by the breath of his slaves; for the satisfied stomach exhales grateful vapors which mount into the brain, and recreate and vivify it. But hunger, misery, despair, are not satiated nor consoled with verses, with sentences and fables. They cry out loudly in their sufferings; deaf indeed must he be who does not hear their lamentations, — accursed he who does not reply to them!

A revolt, even should it be crushed, will enlighten the minds more than a thousand years of precepts, more than three centuries of examples. It will enlighten the kings, if it do not overthrow them. That is much; that is enough!"

A murmur of admiration rose from several lips.

"Where are our enemies?" pursued Marat. "Above us! above us! They guard the doors of the palaces, they surround the steps of the throne. Upon this throne is their palladium, which they guard more vigilantly and apprehensively than the Trojans guarded theirs. This palladium, which makes them all-powerful, rich, and insolent, is royalty. This royalty cannot be reached save by passing over the bodies of those who guard it, as one can reach the general only by overthrowing the battalions which protect him. Well, history tells us of many battalions which have been captured, many generals who have been overthrown, from Darius down to King John, from Regulus down to Duguesclin.

"If we overthrow the guard, we reach the idol. Let us begin by striking down the sentinels, — we can afterward strike down the chief. Let the attack be first on the courtiers, the nobility, the aristocracy; afterward upon the kings. Count the privileged heads; there are scarcely two hundred thousand. Walk through this beautiful garden called France, with a sharp switch in your hand, and cut down these two hundred thousand heads as Tarquin did the poppies of Latium, and all will be done. There will then be only two powers opposed to each other, — the people and the kingship. Then let this kingship, this symbol, try to struggle with the people, this giant, — and you will see! When dwarfs wish to overthrow a colossus, they begin with the pedestal. When the woodmen wish to cut down the oak, they attack it at the foot. Woodmen!

woodmen! seize the hatchet, attack the oak at its roots, and the ancient tree with its proud branches will soon bite the dust!"

"And will crush you like pygmies in its fall, unhappy schemers that you are!" exclaimed Balsamo, in a voice of thunder. "Ah! you rail against the poets, and you speak in metaphors even more poetical and more imaginative than theirs! Brother! brother!" continued he, addressing Marat, "I tell you, you have quoted these sentences from some romance which you are composing in your garret!"

Marat reddened.

"Do you know what a revolution is?" continued Balsamo; "I have seen two hundred, and can tell you. I have seen that of ancient Egypt, that of Assyria, those of Rome and Greece, and that of the Netherlands. I have seen those of the Middle Ages, when the nations rushed one against another, — East against West, West against East, — and murdered without knowing why. From the Shepherd Kings to our own time there have been perhaps a hundred revolutions, and yet now you complain of being slaves. Revolutions, then, have done no good. And why? Because those who caused the revolutions were all struck with the same vertigo, — they were too hasty. Does God, who presides over the revolutions of the world, as genius presides over the revolutions of men, — does he hasten?

"'Cut down the oak!' you cry; and you do not calculate that the oak, which needs but a second to fall, covers as much ground when it falls as a horse at a gallop would cross in thirty seconds. Now, those who throw down the oak, not having time to avoid the unforeseen fall, will be lost, crushed, killed, beneath its immense trunk. That is what you want, is it not? You will never get that from

me. Like God, I have lived through twenty, thirty, forty, generations of human life. Like God, I am eternal. Like God, I shall be patient. I carry my fate, yours, the world's, in the hollow of this hand. No one can make me open this hand, full of overwhelming truth, unless I wish to open it. There is thunder in it, I know. Well! the thunderbolt shall remain in it, as if hidden in the murky cloud. Brothers! brothers! descend from these sublime heights, and let us once more walk upon the earth.

"I tell you plainly, and with sincere conviction, that the time has not yet come. The king who is on the throne is the last reflection of the great monarch whom the people still venerate; and in this fading monarchy there is yet something dazzling enough to outweigh the lightning shafts of your petty anger. This man was born a king, and will die a king. His race is insolent, but pure. You can read his origin on his brow, in his gestures, in his voice, — he will always be king. Overthrow him, and that will happen to him which happened to Charles the First; his executioners will kneel before him, and the courtiers who accompany him in his misfortune will, like Lord Capel, kiss the axe which has struck off the head of their master.

"Now, brothers, you all know that England was too hasty. King Charles the First died upon the scaffold, indeed; but King Charles the Second, his son, died upon the throne.

"Wait, wait, brothers! for the time will soon be propitious. You wish to destroy the lilies. That is our motto, — 'Lilia pedibus destrue.' But not a single root must leave to the flower of Saint Louis the hope of blooming again. You wish to destroy royalty? To destroy royalty forever, you must weaken her *prestige* as well as her essence. You wish to destroy royalty? Wait till

royalty is no longer a sacred office, but merely a trade, — till it is practised in a shop, not in a temple. Now, what is most sacred in royalty — namely, the legitimate transmission of the throne, authorized for centuries by God and the people — is about to be lost forever. Listen, listen! This invincible, this impervious barrier between us nothings and these quasi divine creatures; this limit which the people have never dared to cross, and which is called legitimacy; this word, brilliant as a lighted watch-tower, and which until now has saved the royal family from shipwreck, — this word will be extinguished by the breath of a mysterious fatality!

"The dauphiness, called to France to perpetuate the race of kings by the admixture of imperial blood, — the dauphiness, married now for a year to the heir of the French crown, — approach, brothers, for I fear to let the sound of my words pass beyond your circle — "

"Well?" asked the six chiefs, with anxiety.

"Well, brothers, the marriage of the dauphiness is still not fully consummated."

A sinister murmur, which would have frozen the monarchs of the world with terror had they heard it, — such deep hatred, such revengeful joy did it breathe, — escaped like a deadly vapor from the little circle of six heads, which almost touched each other, Balsamo's being bent over them from his rostrum.

"In this condition of affairs," continued Balsamo, "two possibilities are presented, equally profitable to our cause.

"The first possibility is that the dauphiness will continue childless, that then the race will be extinguished, and the future will have for our friends neither wars, difficulties, nor troubles. That will happen to this family, foredoomed to perish, which has always happened in France when three brothers have succeeded to the throne;

which happened to the sons of Philippe le Bel, — Louis le Hutin, Philippe le Long, and Charles IV., — who all reigned and died leaving no issue; which happened to the three sons of Henri II., — François II., Charles IX., and Henri III., — who all reigned, and died without issue. Like these, Monseigneur le Dauphin, Monseigneur le Comte de Provence, and Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois will all reign, and will die leaving no children, as died these others, — it is the law of destiny. Then, as after Charles IV., the last king of the house of Capet, came Philippe VI. de Valois, of a family collateral to that of the kings preceding; as, after Henri III., the last king of the house of Valois, came Henri IV. de Bourbon, of a family collateral to that which preceded, — after the Comte d'Artois, whose name is written in the book of fate as that of the last king of the elder branch, will come perhaps some Cromwell or some William of Orange, — some stranger to the race or to the natural order of succession.

"This is what the first possibility offers us. The second is that the dauphiness will not continue childless. And here is the trap into which our enemies will throw themselves, while expecting us to be caught in it. Oh! if the dauphiness does not continue childless, if she becomes a mother, then, while all the court will rejoice, and will believe that royalty is more firmly established in France, we ourselves shall rejoice also; for we shall possess a secret so terrible that no prestige, no power, no efforts can make head against the crimes which that secret will involve, and the unhappiness which that maternity will bring upon the future queen. The heir she will give to the throne we shall easily show to be illegitimate, for we shall easily prove that maternity to be adulterous. So that, in comparison with that factitious good fortune which Heaven will seem to have granted them, barrenness would have

been a blessing from on high. This is why I refrain, gentlemen; this is why I wait, brothers; in short, this is why I consider it useless to unchain to-day the passions of the people, which I shall employ effectively when the fit time shall arrive.

"Now, gentlemen, you know this year's work; you see the progress of our mines. Be assured that we shall succeed only by the genius and the courage of some, who will serve as the eyes and the brain; by the perseverance and labor of others, who will represent the arms; by the faith and the devotion of others again, who will be the heart. Above all, remember the necessity of a blind submission, which ordains that even your chief must sacrifice himself to the statutes of the order, whenever those statutes require it.

"After this, gentlemen and beloved brothers, I would dissolve the meeting, if there were not still a good act to perform, an evil to point out. The great writer who came among us this evening, and who would have been one of us but for the stormy zeal of one of our brothers who alarmed his timid soul, — this great author proved himself in the right before our assembly; and I deplore it as a misfortune that a stranger should be victorious in the presence of a majority of brothers who are imperfectly acquainted with our rules, and utterly ignorant of our aim.

"Rousseau, triumphing over the truths of our association with the sophisms of his books, represents a fundamental vice which I would extirpate by steel and fire, if I had not the hope of curing it by persuasion. The self-love of one of our brothers has exhibited itself with mischievous results. He has led us to defeat in the discussion. No such manifestation, I trust, will again be made; and if it is, I shall have recourse to the laws of discipline.

"In the mean time, gentlemen, propagate the faith by gentleness and persuasion. Insinuate it, do not impose it; do not force it into rebellious minds with wedges and blows, as the inquisitors tortured their victims. Remember that we cannot be great until after we have been acknowledged good; and that we cannot be acknowledged good but by appearing better than those who surround us. Remember, too, that among us the great, the good, the best, are nothing without science, art, and faith; nothing, in short, compared with those whom God has marked with a peculiar stamp, to give them authority to govern men and rule empires.

"Gentlemen, the meeting is dissolved."

After pronouncing these words, Balsamo put on his hat and folded himself in his cloak.

Each of the initiated left in his turn, alone and silently, in order not to awaken suspicion.

CHAPTER V.

THE BODY AND THE SOUL.

THE last who remained beside the master was Marat, the surgeon. He was very pale, and humbly approached the terrible orator of unlimited power.

"Master," said he, "have I indeed committed a fault?"

"A great one, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "and, what is worse, you do not believe that you have committed one."

"Well, yes, I confess that not only do I not believe that I committed a fault, but I think that I spoke as I ought to speak."

"Pride, pride!" muttered Balsamo; "pride, — destructive demon! Men combat the fever in the blood of the patient, they dispel the plague from the water and the air; but they let pride strike such deep roots in their hearts that they cannot exterminate it."

"Oh, Master," said Marat, "you have a very despicable opinion of me! Am I indeed so worthless that I cannot count for anything among my fellows? Have I gathered the fruits of my labor so ill that I cannot utter a word without being taxed with ignorance? Am I such a lukewarm member that my earnestness is suspected? If I have no other good quality, I have at least that of living in devotion to the holy cause of the people."

"Monsieur," replied Balsamo, "it is because the principle of good yet struggles in you against the principle of evil, which appears to me likely to carry you away one day, that I will try to correct these defects in you. If I

can succeed — if pride has not yet subdued every other sentiment in your breast — I shall succeed in one hour."

"In one hour?" said Marat.

"Yes; will you grant me that time?"

"Certainly."

"Where shall I see you?"

"Master, it is my place to seek you in any place you may choose to point out to your servant."

"Well," said Balsamo, "I will come to your house."

"Mark the promise you are making, Master. I live in an attic in the Rue des Cordeliers. An attic, remember!" said Marat, with an affectation of proud simplicity, with a boasting display of poverty, which did not escape Balsamo, "while you —"

"Well, while I?"

"While you, it is said, inhabit a palace."

Balsamo shrugged his shoulders, like a giant who looks down with contempt on the anger of a dwarf. "Well, even so, Monsieur," he replied; "I will come to see you in your garret."

"And when, Monsieur?"

"To-morrow."

"At what time?"

"In the morning."

"At daybreak I go to my lecture-room, and from thence to the hospital."

"That is precisely what I want. I would have asked you to take me with you, had you not proposed it."

"But early, remember," said Marat; "I sleep little."

"And I do not sleep at all," replied Balsamo. "At daybreak, then."

"I shall expect you."

Thereupon they separated, for they had reached the

door opening on the street, now as dark and solitary as it had been noisy and populous when they entered. Balsamo turned to the left, and rapidly disappeared. Marat followed his example, striding toward the right with his long, meagre limbs.

Balsamo was punctual. The next morning at six o'clock he knocked at the door of a long corridor, which, with the six rooms opening into it, formed the upper story of an old house in the Rue des Cordeliers.

It was evident that Marat had made great preparations to receive his illustrious guest. The small bed of walnut-tree, and the wooden chest of drawers beside it, shone bright beneath the sturdy arm of the charwoman, who was busily engaged scrubbing the decayed furniture.

Marat himself lent a helping hand to the old woman, and was refreshing the withered flowers which were arranged in a blue delft pot, and which formed the principal ornament of the attic. He still held a dusting-cloth under his arm, which showed that he had not touched the flowers until he had given a rub to the furniture.

As the key was in the door, and as Balsamo had entered without knocking, he interrupted Marat in his occupation. Marat, at the sight of the master, blushed much more deeply than was becoming in a true stoic. "You see, Master," said he, stealthily throwing the tell-tale cloth behind a curtain, "I am a domestic man, and assist this good woman. It is from preference that I choose this task, which is, perhaps, not quite plebeian, but it is still less aristocratic."

"It is that of a poor young man who loves cleanliness," said Balsamo, coldly, "nothing more. Are you ready, Monsieur? You know my moments are precious."

"I have only to slip on my coat, Monsieur. Dame 'Grivette, my coat! She is my portress, Monsieur, — my

footman, my cook, my housekeeper, and she costs me one crown a month."

"Economy is praiseworthy," said Balsamo; "it is the wealth of the poor, and the wisdom of the rich."

"My hat and cane," said Marat.

"Stretch out your hand," said Balsamo; "there is your hat, and no doubt this cane which is near your hat is yours."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Monsieur; I am quite confused."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur. My watch, Dame Grivette!"

Dame Grivette bustled about the room as if in search of something, but did not reply.

"You have no occasion for a watch, Monsieur, to go to the lecture-room and the hospital; it will perhaps not be easily found, and that would cause some delay."

"But Monsieur, I attach great value to my watch, which is an excellent one, and which I bought with my savings."

"In your absence, Dame Grivette will look for it," replied Balsamo, with a smile; "and if she searches carefully, it will be found when you return."

"Oh, certainly!" said Dame Grivette, "it will be found, unless Monsieur has left it somewhere else. Nothing is lost here."

"You see," said Balsamo. "Come, Monsieur, come!"

Marat did not venture to persist, and followed Balsamo, grumbling. When they reached the door, Balsamo said, "Where shall we go first?"

"To the lecture-room, if you please, Master; I have marked a subject which must have died last night of acute meningitis. I want to make some observations on his brain, and I do not wish my colleagues to take it from me."

"Then let us go to the lecture-room, Monsieur Marat."

"Moreover, it is only a few yards from here; the lecture-room is close to the hospital, and we shall need only to go in and come out again, — you might even wait for me at the door."

"On the contrary, I wish to accompany you inside; you will give me your opinion on this subject."

"When he was alive, Monsieur?"

"No, since he has become a corpse."

"Take care," said Marat, smiling; "I may gain a point over you, for I am well acquainted with this part of my profession, and am said to be a skilful anatomist."

"Pride! pride! ever pride!" murmured Balsamo.

"What do you say?" asked Marat.

"I say that we shall see, Monsieur," replied Balsamo. "Let us enter."

Marat preceded Balsamo in the narrow alley leading to the lecture-room, which was situated at the extremity of the Rue Hautefeuille. Balsamo followed him unhesitatingly until they reached a long narrow room, where two corpses, a male and a female, lay stretched upon a marble table.

The woman had died young; the man was old and bald. A soiled sheet was thrown over their bodies, leaving their faces half-uncovered. They were lying side by side upon this cold bed, — they who had perhaps never met before in the world, and whose souls, then voyaging in eternity, must, could they have looked down on earth, have been struck with astonishment at the proximity of their mortal remains.

Marat with a single movement raised and threw aside the coarse linen which covered the two bodies, whom death had thus made equal before the anatomist's scalpel.

"Is not the sight of the dead repugnant to your feelings?" asked Marat, in his usual boasting manner.

"It makes me sad," replied Balsamo.

"Want of custom," said Marat. "I, who see this sight daily, feel neither sadness nor disgust. We practitioners live with the dead, and do not interrupt any of the functions of our existence on their account."

"It is a sad privilege of your profession, Monsieur."

"Besides," added Marat, "why should I be sad, or feel disgust? In the first case, reflection forbids it; in the second, custom."

"Explain your ideas," said Balsamo; "I do not understand you clearly. Reflection first."

"Well, why should I be afraid? Why should I fear an inert mass, — a statue of flesh instead of stone, marble, or granite?"

"In short, you think there is nothing in a corpse?"

"Nothing, — absolutely nothing."

"Do you believe that?"

"I am sure of it."

"But in the living body."

"There is motion," said Marat, proudly.

"And the soul, — you do not speak of it, Monsieur."

"I have never found it in the bodies which I have dissected."

"Because you have dissected only corpses."

"Oh, no, Monsieur! I have frequently operated upon living bodies."

"And you have found nothing more in them than in the corpses?"

"Yes, I have found pain. Do you call pain the soul?"

"Then you do not believe in it?"

"In what?"

"In the soul."

"I believe in it, because I am at liberty to call it motion, if I wish."

"That is well. You believe in the soul; that is all I asked. I am glad you believe in it."

"One moment, Master. Let us understand each other, and above all, let us not exaggerate," said Marat, with his serpent smile. "We practitioners are rather disposed to materialism."

"These bodies are very cold," said Balsamo, dreamily, "and this woman was very beautiful."

"Why, yes."

"A lovely soul would have been suitable in this lovely body."

"Ah! there was the mistake of him who created her. A beautiful scabbard, but a vile sword. This corpse, Master, is that of a wretched woman who had just left Saint Lazare when she died of cerebral inflammation in the Hôtel Dieu. Her history is long, and tolerably scandalous. If you call the motive power which impelled this creature 'soul,' you wrong our souls, which must be of the same essence, since they are derived from the same source."

"Her soul should have been cured," said Balsamo; "it was lost for want of the only physician who is indispensable, — a physician of the soul."

"Alas, Master, that is another of your theories! There are only physicians for the body," replied Marat, with a bitter smile. "Now you have a word on your lips which Molière has often employed in his comedies; and it is this word which makes you smile."

"No," said Balsamo, "you mistake; you cannot know why I smile. What we concluded just now was that these corpses are void, was it not?"

"And insensible," added Marat, raising the young woman's head, and letting it fall noisily upon the marble, while the body neither moved nor shuddered.

"Very well," said Balsamo; "let us now go to the hospital."

"Wait one moment, Master, I entreat you, until I have separated from the trunk this head, which I am most anxious to have, as it was the seat of a very strange disease. Will you allow me?"

"Do you ask?" said Balsamo.

Marat opened his case, took from it a bistoury, and picked up in a corner a large wooden mallet stained with blood. Then with a practised hand he made a circular incision, which separated all the flesh and the muscles of the neck; and having thus reached the bone, he slipped his bistoury between two joints of the vertebral column, and struck a sharp blow upon it with the mallet.

The head rolled upon the table, and from the table upon the floor. Marat was obliged to seize it with his damp hands. Balsamo turned away, not to give too much joy to the triumphant operator.

"One day," said Marat, who thought he had hit the master in a weak point, — "one day some philanthropist will occupy himself with the details of death as others do with those of life, and will invent a machine which shall sever a head at a single blow, and cause instantaneous annihilation, which no other instrument of death does. The wheel, quartering, and hanging, are punishments suitable for savages, but not for civilized people. An enlightened nation like France should punish, but not revenge. Those who condemn to the wheel, who hang or quarter, revenge themselves upon the criminal by inflicting pain before punishing him by death; and that, in my opinion, is too much by half."

"And in mine also, Monsieur. But what kind of an instrument do you mean?"

"I can fancy a machine cold and impassive as the law itself. The man who is charged with fulfilling the last office is moved at the sight of his fellow-man, and sometimes strikes badly, as in the case of the Duke of Monmouth and that of Chalais. This could not happen with a machine having, for instance, two arms of oak wielding a cutlass."

"And do you believe, Monsieur, that because the knife would pass with the rapidity of lightning between the base of the occiput and the trapezoid muscles, death would be instantaneous and the pain momentary?"

"Certainly; death would be instantaneous, for the iron would sever at a blow the nerves which cause motion. The pain would be momentary, for the blade would separate the brain, which is the seat of feeling, from the heart, which is the centre of life."

"Monsieur," said Balsamo, "the punishment of decapitation exists in Germany."

"Yes, but by the sword; and, as I said before, a man's hand may tremble."

"Such a machine exists in Italy; an arm of oak wields it. It is called the *mannaja*."

"Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, I have seen criminals decapitated by the executioner raise their headless bodies from the bench on which they were seated, and stagger off, to fall ten steps from there. I have picked up heads which had rolled to the foot of the *mannaja*, — as that head you are holding by the hair has just rolled from the marble table, — and on pronouncing in their ears the name by which those persons had been called, I have seen the eyes open again and turn in their orbits, seeking to discover who

from the earth had called to them in that passage from time to eternity."

"A nervous movement, — nothing else."

"Are the nerves not the organs of sensibility?"

"What do you conclude from that, Monsieur?"

"I conclude that it would be better, instead of inventing a machine which kills in order to punish, that man should seek a means of punishing without killing. The society which will invent this means will assuredly be the best and the most enlightened of societies."

"Utopia again, — always Utopia!" said Marat.

"Perhaps you are right," said Balsamo; "time will show. But did you not speak of the hospital? Let us go!"

"Come, then," said Marat; and he tied the woman's head in his pocket-handkerchief, carefully knotting the four corners. "Now I am sure, at least," said he, as he left the hall, "that my comrades will have only my leavings."

They took the way to the Hôtel Dieu, — the dreamer and the practitioner side by side.

"You have cut off this head very coolly and very skilfully, Monsieur," said Balsamo. "Do you feel less emotion when you operate upon the living than the dead? Does the sight of suffering affect you more than that of immobility? Have you more pity for living bodies than for corpses?"

"No; that would be as great a fault as for the executioner to be moved. You may kill a man by cutting his thigh unskilfully, just as well as by severing the head from the body. A good surgeon operates with his hand, not with his heart; though he knows well at the same time, in his heart, that for one moment of suffering he gives years of life and health. That is the fair side of our profession, Master."

"Yes, Monsieur; but in the living bodies you meet with the soul, I hope."

"Yes, if you will agree with me that the soul is motion, or sensibility. Yes, certainly, I meet with it; and it is very troublesome too, for it kills far more patients than any scalpel."

They had by this time arrived at the threshold of the Hôtel Dieu, and now entered the hospital. Guided by Marat, who still carried his funereal burden, Balsamo penetrated to the hall where the operations were performed, in which the head-surgeon and the students in surgery were assembled. The attendant had just brought in a young man who had been run over the preceding week by a heavy carriage, the wheel of which had crushed his foot. A hasty operation performed upon the limb when benumbed by pain had not been sufficient; the inflammation had rapidly extended, and the amputation of the leg had now become an urgent necessity.

The unfortunate man, stretched upon his bed of anguish, looked, with a horror which would have melted tigers, at the band of eager students who were watching for the moment of his martyrdom, perhaps of his death, that they might study the science of life, — that marvellous phenomenon behind which lies the gloomy phenomenon of death.

He seemed to implore a pitying look, a smile, or a word of encouragement from each of the students and attendants; but the beatings of his heart were responded to only by indifference, his beseeching looks encountered only steel. A remnant of courage and of pride kept him silent. He reserved all his strength for the cries which pain would soon wring from him. But when he felt the heavy hand of the attendant upon his shoulder, when the arms of the assistants twined around him like

the serpents of Laocoön, when he heard the operator's voice cry, "Courage!" the unfortunate man ventured to break the silence, and asked in a plaintive voice, "Shall I suffer much?"

"Oh, no! make your mind easy," replied Marat, with a hypocritical smile, which to the patient seemed kind, but to Balsamo ironical.

Marat saw that Balsamo had understood him; he approached and whispered: "It is a dreadful operation. The bone is full of cracks, and fearfully sensitive. He will die, not of the wound, but of the pain. That is what the soul does for this poor man."

"Then why do you operate? Why do you not let him die in peace?"

"Because it is the surgeon's duty to attempt a cure, even when the cure seems impossible."

"And you say he will suffer?"

"Fearfully."

"And that his soul is the cause?"

"His soul, which has too much sympathy with the body."

"Then why not operate upon the soul? Perhaps the tranquillity of the one would cause the cure of the other."

"I have done so," said Marat, while the attendants continued to bind the patient.

"You have prepared his soul?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"As one always does, — by words. I spoke to his soul, his intelligence, his sensibility, — to that organ which caused the Greek philosopher to exclaim, 'Pain, thou art no evil,' — the language suitable for it. I said to him: 'You will not suffer.' That is the only remedy hitherto

known, as regards the soul, — falsehood! Why is this she-devil of a soul connected with the body? When I cut off this head just now, the body said nothing, yet the operation was a serious one. But motion had ceased, sensibility was extinguished, the soul had fled, as you spiritualists say. This is the reason why the head I severed said nothing, why the body which I mutilated allowed me to do so; while this body which is yet inhabited by a soul — for a short time indeed, but still inhabited — will cry out fearfully. Stop your ears well, Master, you who are moved by this union of body and soul, which will always defeat your theory until you succeed in isolating the body from the soul."

"And you believe we shall never arrive at this isolation?"

"Try," said Marat; "this is an excellent opportunity."

"Well, yes, you are right," said Balsamo; "the opportunity is a good one, and I will make the attempt."

"You will make the attempt?"

"I will."

"How will you do it?"

"This young man interests me; he shall not suffer."

"You are an illustrious chief," said Marat, "but you are neither God the Father, nor God the Son, and you cannot prevent this man from suffering."

"If he were not to feel the pain, do you think he would recover?"

"His recovery would be more probable, but not certain."

Balsamo cast an inexpressible look of triumph upon Marat, and placed himself before the young patient, whose frightened eyes, already dilated with the anguish of terror, met his.

"Sleep," said Balsamo, not alone with his lips, but

with his look, with his will, with all the heat of his blood, all the vital energy of his body.

The head-surgeon was just beginning to feel the injured leg, and to point out the aggravated nature of the case to his students; but at Balsamo's command the young man, who had raised himself upon his seat, oscillated for a moment in the arms of his attendants, his head drooped, and his eyes closed.

"He is ill," said Marat.

"No, Monsieur."

"But do you not see that he loses consciousness?"

"He is sleeping."

"What, he sleeps?"

"Yes."

Every one turned to look at the strange physician, whom they took for a madman. An incredulous smile hovered on Marat's lips.

"Is it usual for people to talk while in a swoon?" asked Balsamo.

"No."

"Well, question him, — he will reply."

"Eh! young man!" cried Marat.

"You need not speak so loud," said Balsamo; "speak in your usual tone."

"Tell us what is the matter with you."

"I was ordered to sleep, and I sleep," replied the patient.

His voice was perfectly calm, and contrasted strangely with that they had heard a few moments before. All the attendants looked at each other.

"Now," said Balsamo, "release him."

"That is impossible," said the head-surgeon; "the slightest movement will spoil the operation."

"He will not stir."

"Who can assure me of that?"

"I, and he also, — ask him."

"Can you be left untied, my friend?"

"Yes."

"And will you promise not to move?"

"I will promise it, if you command me."

"I command it."

"Faith! Monsieur, you speak so positively that I am tempted to make the trial."

"Do so, Monsieur; and fear nothing."

"Untie him."

The assistants obeyed. Balsamo advanced to the bedside. "From this moment," said he, "do not stir until I order you."

A statue upon a tombstone could not have been more motionless than the patient, upon this injunction.

"Now operate, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "the patient is quite ready."

The surgeon took his bistoury; but when upon the point of using it, he hesitated.

"Cut, Monsieur! cut, I tell you!" said Balsamo, with the air of an inspired prophet.

And the surgeon, yielding — like Marat, like the patient, like every one present — to the irresistible influence of Balsamo's words, made ready to begin. The sound of the knife passing through the flesh was heard, but the patient did not stir, nor even sigh.

"From what country do you come, my friend?" asked Balsamo.

"I am a Breton, Monsieur," replied the patient, smiling.

"And you love your country?"

"Oh, Monsieur, it is so beautiful!"

In the mean time the surgeon was making the circular

incisions in the flesh, by means of which, in amputations, the bone is laid bare.

"You left it when young?" asked Balsamo.

"At ten years of age, Monsieur."

The incisions were made; the surgeon placed the saw on the bone.

"My friend," said Balsamo, "sing me that song which the salt-makers of Batz chant as they return to their homes after the day's work is over. I can remember only the first line, —

"'My salt covered o'er with its mantle of foam.'"

The saw was now severing the bone; but at Balsamo's command the patient smiled, and began to sing in a low, melodious, ecstatic voice, like a lover or like a poet, the following verses: —

"My salt covered o'er with its mantle of foam,
The lake of pure azure that mirrors my home,
My stove where the peats ever cheerfully burn,
And the honeyed wheat-cake which awaits my return;

"The wife of my bosom, my silver-haired sire,
My urchins who sport round the clear evening fire;
And there, where the wild flowers, in brightest of bloom,
Their fragrance diffuse round my loved mother's tomb, —

"Blest, blest be ye all! Now the day's task is o'er,
And I stand once again at my own cottage door;
And richly will love my brief absence repay,
And the calm joys of eve the rude toils of the day."

The leg fell upon the bed while the patient was still singing.

CHAPTER VI.

BODY AND SOUL.

Every one looked with astonishment at the patient, — with admiration at the physician. Some said that both were mad. Marat communicated this opinion to Balsamo in a whisper. "Terror has made the poor devil lose his senses," said he; "that is why he feels no pain."

"I think not," replied Balsamo; "and far from having lost his senses, I am sure that if I asked him, he could tell us the day of his death if he is to die, or the period of his convalescence if he is to recover."

Marat was almost inclined to adopt the general opinion, — that Balsamo was as mad as his patient. In the mean time, however, the surgeon was tying up the arteries, from which spouted streams of blood.

Balsamo drew a small phial from his pocket, poured a few drops of the liquid it contained upon a little ball of lint, and begged the chief surgeon to apply the lint to the arteries. The latter obeyed, with a certain feeling of curiosity. He was one of the most celebrated practitioners of that period, — a man truly enamoured of his profession, who repudiated none of its mysteries, and for whom chance was but the makeshift of ignorance.

He applied the lint to the artery, which quivered, bubbled, and then allowed the blood to escape only drop by drop. He could now tie up the artery with the greatest ease.

This time Balsamo obtained an undoubted triumph, and all present asked him where he had studied, and of what school he was.

"I am a German physician of the school of Göttingen," he replied, "and I have made this discovery you have just witnessed. However, gentlemen and fellow-practitioners, I wish this discovery to remain a secret for the present, as I have a wholesome terror of the stake, and the parliament of Paris might perhaps resume their functions once more, for the pleasure of condemning a sorcerer to be burned."

The head-surgeon was still plunged in a revery. Marat also seemed thoughtful, but he was the first to break the silence. "You said just now," said he, "that if you were to question this man about the result of this operation, he would reply truly, though the result is still veiled in futurity."

"I assert it again," replied Balsamo.

"Well, let us have the proof."

"What is this poor fellow's name?"

"Havard," replied Marat.

Balsamo turned to the patient, whose lips were yet murmuring the last words of the plaintive air.

"Well, my friend," asked he, "what do you augur from the state of this poor Havard?"

"What do I augur from his state?" replied the patient. "Stay! I must return from Brittany, where I was, to the Hôtel Dieu, where he is."

"Just so. Enter, look at him, and tell me the truth respecting him."

"Oh! he is very ill; his leg has been cut off."

"Indeed!" said Balsamo. "And has the operation been successful?"

"Exceedingly so; but —"

The patient's face darkened.

"But what?" asked Balsamo.

"But," resumed the patient, "he has a terrible trial to pass through. The fever —"

"When will it come on?"

"At seven o'clock this evening."

All the spectators looked at each other.

"And this fever?" asked Balsamo.

"Oh! it will make him very ill; but he will recover from the first attack."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then, after this first attack, will he be saved?"

"Alas! no," said the wounded man, sighing.

"Will the fever return, then?"

"Oh, yes! and more severely than before. Poor Havard! poor Havard!" he continued, "he has a wife and several children;" and his eyes filled with tears.

"Must his wife be a widow, then, and his children orphans?" asked Balsamo.

"Wait, wait!"

He clasped his hands.

"No, no," he exclaimed, his features lighting up with an expression of sublime faith; "no, his wife and children have prayed so much that they have obtained God's mercy for him."

"Then he will recover?"

"Yes."

"You hear, gentlemen," said Balsamo; "he will recover."

"Ask him in how many days," said Marat.

"In how many days, do you say?"

"Yes; you said he could indicate the phases, and the duration of his convalescence."

"I ask nothing better than to question him on the subject."

"Well, then, question him now."

"And when do you think Havard will recover?" said Balsamo.

"Oh! his cure will take a long time, — a month, six weeks, two months. He entered this hospital five days ago, and he will leave it two months and two weeks after having entered."

"And he will leave it cured?"

"Yes."

"But," said Marat, "unable to work, and consequently unable to maintain his wife and children."

Havard again clasped his hands. "Oh! God is good; God will provide for him!"

"And how will God provide for him?" asked Marat. "As I am in the way of learning to-day, I should much like to learn that."

"God has sent to his bedside a charitable man, who has taken pity upon him, and who has said to himself, 'poor Havard shall not want.'"

The spectators were amazed; Balsamo smiled.

"This is in truth a strange scene," said the head-surgeon, at the same time taking the patient's hand, and feeling his chest and forehead; "this man is dreaming."

"Do you think so?" said Balsamo.

Then darting upon the sick man a look of authority and energy, "Awake, Havard!" said he.

The young man opened his eyes with some difficulty, and gazed with profound surprise upon all these spectators, who had so soon laid aside their threatening attitude, and assumed an inoffensive manner toward him.

"Well," said he, sadly, "have you not operated yet? Are you still going to make me suffer?"

Balsamo was quick to make the reply, for he feared the invalid's emotion. But there was no need for such haste; the surprise of all the spectators was so great that none would have anticipated him.

"My friend," said he, "be calm. The head-surgeon has operated upon your leg in such a manner as to satisfy all the requirements of your condition. It seems, my poor fellow, that you are not very strong-minded, for you fainted at the first incision."

"Oh! so much the better," said the Breton, smilingly; "I felt nothing, and my sleep was even sweet and refreshing. What happiness, — my leg will not be cut off!"

But just at that moment the poor man looked down, and saw the bed full of blood, and his amputated leg lying near him. He uttered a scream, and this time fainted in reality.

"Now question him," said Balsamo, coldly, to Marat; "you will see if he replies."

Then, taking the head-surgeon aside, while the nurses carried the poor young man back to his bed, "Monsieur," said Balsamo, "you heard what your poor patient said?"

"Yes, Monsieur, that he would recover."

"He said something else; he said that God would take pity upon him, and would send him wherewithal to support his wife and children."

"Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, he told the truth on this point, as on the others. Only you must undertake to be the charitable medium of affording him this assistance. Here is a diamond, worth about twenty thousand francs; when the poor man is cured, sell it, and give him the proceeds. In the mean time, since the soul, as your pupil Monsieur Marat said very truly, has a great influence upon the body, tell Havard, as soon as he is restored to

consciousness, that his future comfort and that of his children is secured."

"But, Monsieur," said the surgeon, hesitating to take the ring which Balsamo offered him, "if he should not recover?"

"He will recover."

"Then allow me at least to give you a receipt."

"Monsieur!"

"That is the only condition upon which I can receive a jewel of such value."

"Do as you think right, Monsieur."

"Your name, if you please?"

"The Comte de Fenix."

The surgeon passed into the adjoining apartment, while Marat, overwhelmed, confounded, but still struggling against the evidence of his senses, approached Balsamo.

In five minutes the surgeon returned, holding in his hand the following receipt, which he gave Balsamo:

I have received from the Comte de Fenix a diamond, which he affirms to be worth twenty thousand francs, the value of which is to be given to the man Havard when he leaves the Hôtel Dieu.

This 15th of September, 1771.

GUILLOTIN, M.D.

Balsamo bowed to the doctor, took the receipt, and left the room, followed by Marat.

"You are forgetting your head," said Balsamo, for whom the wandering of the young student's thoughts was a great triumph.

"Ah, true!" said he; and he again picked up his dismal burden.

When they emerged into the street, both walked forward very quickly, without uttering a word; then, having

reached the Rue des Cordeliers, they ascended the steep stairs which led to the attic.

Marat, who had not forgotten the disappearance of his watch, stopped before the lodge of the portress, — if the den which she inhabited may be called by that name, — and asked for Dame Grivette.

A thin, stunted, miserable-looking child, about seven years old, replied, in a whining voice: "Mamma is gone out; she said that when you came home I was to give you this letter."

"No, no, my little friend," said Marat; "tell her to bring it me herself."

"Yes, Monsieur."

And Marat and Balsamo proceeded on their way.

"Ah!" said Marat, pointing out a chair to Balsamo, and falling upon a stool himself, "I see the master has some fine secrets."

"It is because I have entered further than most men into the confidence of Nature and of God," replied Balsamo.

"Oh!" said Marat, "how science proves man's omnipotence, and how proud one should be that he is a man!"

"True, — and a physician, you should have added."

"Therefore I am proud of you, Master," said Marat.

"And yet," replied Balsamo, smiling, "I am but a poor physician of souls."

"Oh! do not say that, Monsieur, — you, who stopped the patient's bleeding by material means."

"I thought my best cure was that of having prevented him from suffering. True, you assured me he was mad."

"He was so for a moment, certainly."

"What do you call madness? Is it not an abstraction of the soul?"

"Or of the mind," said Marat.

"We will not discuss the point. The soul serves me as a term for what I mean. When the object is found, it matters little how you call it."

"There is where we differ, Monsieur. You pretend you have found the thing, and seek only the name; I maintain that you seek both the object and the name."

"We will return to that immediately. You said, then, that madness was a temporary abstraction of the mind?"

"Certainly."

"Involuntary, is it not?"

"Yes; I have seen a madman at Bicêtre, who bit the iron bars of his cell, crying out all the time, 'Cook, your pheasants are very tender, but they are badly dressed.'"

"But you admit, at least, that this madness passes over the mind like a cloud, and that when it has passed, the mind resumes its former brightness?"

"That scarcely ever happens."

"Yet you saw our patient recover his senses perfectly after his insane dream."

"I saw it, but I did not understand what I saw. It is an exceptional case, — one of those strange events which the Israelites called miracles."

"No, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "it is simply the abstraction of the soul, the twofold isolation of spirit and matter, — of matter, a thing inert, dust, which will return to dust; and soul, the divine spark which was enclosed for a short period in that dark lantern called the body, and which, being the child of heaven, will return to heaven after the body has sunk to earth."

"Then you abstracted the soul momentarily from the body?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I commanded it to quit the miserable abode which it occupied. I raised it from the abyss of suffering in which pain had bound it, and transported it

into pure and heavenly regions. What, then, remained for the surgeon? That which remained for your dissecting knife, when you severed from the dead body that head you are carrying, — nothing but inert flesh, matter, clay."

"And in whose name did you command the soul?"

"In his name who created all souls by his breath, — the souls of worlds, the souls of men, — in the name of God."

"Then," said Marat, "you deny free-will?"

"I!" said Balsamo; "on the contrary, what am I doing at this moment? I show you, on the one hand, free-will; on the other, abstraction. I show you a dying man, a prey to excruciating pain; this man has a stoical soul, he anticipates the operation, he asks for it, he bears it, but he suffers. That is free-will. But when I approach the dying man, — I, the ambassador of God, the prophet, the apostle, — and taking pity upon this man who is my fellow-creature, I abstract, by the powers which the Lord has given me, the soul from the suffering body, this blind, inert, insensible body becomes a spectacle which the soul contemplates with a pitying eye from the height of its celestial sphere. Did you not hear Havard, when speaking of himself, say 'this poor Havard'? He did not say 'myself.' It was because this soul had in truth no longer any connection with the body, — it was already winging its way to heaven."

"But, by this way of reckoning, man is nothing," said Marat; "and I can no longer say to the tyrant, 'You have power over my body, but none over my soul.'"

"Ah! now you pass from truth to sophism; I have already told you, Monsieur, it is your failing. God lends the soul to the body, it is true; but it is no less true that during the time the soul animates this body, there is a

union between the two, an influence of one over the other, — a supremacy of matter over mind, or mind over matter, according as, for some purpose hidden from us, God permits either the body or the soul to be the ruling power. But it is no less true that the soul which animates the beggar is as pure as that which reigns in the bosom of the king. That is the dogma which you, an apostle of equality, ought to preach. Prove the equality of the spiritual essences in these two cases, since you can establish it by the aid of all that is most sacred in the eyes of men, by holy books and traditions, by science and faith. Of what importance is the equality of two substances? With physical equality you do not soar to the throne of God. Just now this poor wounded man, this ignorant child of the people, told you things concerning his illness which none among the doctors would have ventured to say. How was that? It was because his soul, temporarily freed from earthly ties, floated above this world, and saw from on high a mystery which our opaqueness of vision hides from us."

Marat turned his dead head back and forward upon the table, seeking a reply which he could not find. "Yes," muttered he, at last, "yes; there is something supernatural in all this."

"Perfectly natural, on the contrary, Monsieur. Cease to call supernatural what has its origin in the functions fulfilling the destiny of the soul. These functions are natural, although perhaps not known."

"But though unknown to us, Master, these functions cannot surely be a mystery to you. The horse, unknown to the Peruvians, was yet familiar to the Spaniards, who had tamed him."

"It would be presumptuous in me to say, 'I know.' I am more humble, Monsieur; I say, 'I believe.'"

"Well, what do you believe?"

"I believe that the first, the most powerful, of all laws is the law of progress. I believe that God has created nothing without having a beneficent design in view; only, as the duration of this world is uncalculated and incalculable, the progress is slow. Our planet, according to the Scriptures, was sixty centuries old when printing came like an immense beacon-light to illuminate the past and the future. With the advent of printing, obscurity and forgetfulness vanished. Printing is the memory of the world. Well! Gutenberg invented printing, and I have recovered my confidence."

"Ah!" said Marat, ironically, "you will perhaps be able at last to read men's hearts."

"Why not?"

"Then you will open that little window in men's breasts which the ancients so much desired to see?"

"There is no need for that, Monsieur. I shall separate the soul from the body; and the soul — the pure, immaculate daughter of God — will reveal to me all the turpitudes of the mortal covering it is condemned to animate."

"Can you reveal material secrets?"

"Why not?"

"Can you tell me, for instance, who has stolen my watch?"

"You lower science to a base level, Monsieur. But no matter. God's greatness is proved as much by a grain of sand as by the mountain, — by the flesh-worm as by the elephant. Yes, I will tell you who has stolen your watch."

Just then a timid knock was heard at the door. It was Marat's servant, who had returned, and who came, according to the young surgeon's order, to bring the letter.

CHAPTER VII.

MARAT'S PORTRESS.

The door opened, and Dame Grivette entered. This woman, whom we have not before taken the trouble to sketch, because she was one of those characters whom the painter keeps in the background so long as he has no occasion for them, — this woman now advances in the moving picture of this history, and demands her place in the immense picture we have undertaken to unroll before the eyes of our readers, in which, if our genius equalled our good-will, we would introduce all classes of beings, from the beggar to the king, from Caliban to Ariel, from Ariel to God.

We shall now therefore attempt a sketch of Dame Grivette, who steps forth out of the shade, and advances toward us. She was a tall, withered creature, from thirty to thirty-five years of age, with dark sallow complexion, and blue eyes encircled with black rings, — the fearful type of that decline, that wasting-away, which is produced in densely populated towns by poverty, bad air, and every sort of degradation, mental as well as bodily, among those creatures whom God created so beautiful, and who would otherwise have become magnificent in their perfect development, as all living denizens of earth, air, and sky are when man has not made their life one long punishment, — when he has not tortured their limbs with chains and their stomachs with hunger, or with food almost as fatal.

Thus Marat's portress would have been a beautiful woman, if from her fifteenth year she had not dwelt in a den without air or light; if the fire of her natural instincts, fed by this oven-like heat, or by the icy cold, had not ceaselessly burned. She had long, thin hands, which the needle of the sempstress had furrowed with little cuts, which the suds of the wash-house had cracked and softened, which the burning coals of the kitchen had roasted and tanned, — but in spite of all, hands which, by their form, that indelible trace of the divine mould, would have been called royal, if, instead of being blistered by the broom, they had wielded the sceptre. So true is it that this poor human body is only the outward sign of our profession.

But in this woman the mind, which was superior to the body, and which consequently had resisted external circumstances better, kept watch like a lamp ; it illumined, as it were, the body by a reflected light, and at times a ray of beauty, youth, intelligence, and love was seen to glance from her dulled and stupid eyes, — a ray of all the finest feelings of the human heart.

Balsamo gazed attentively at the woman, or rather at this singular nature, which from the first had arrested his attention.

The portress entered, holding the letter in her hand, and in a soft, insinuating voice, in the voice of an old woman, — for women condemned to poverty are old at thirty, — said, " Monsieur Marat, here is the letter you asked for."

" It was not the letter I wanted," said Marat ; " I wished to see you."

" Well ! here I am at your service, Monsieur Marat." Dame Grivette made a reverence. " What do you want with me ?"

" You know very well what I want ; I want to know something about my watch."

"Ah! well, there! I can't tell what has become of it. I saw it all day yesterday hanging from the nail over the mantelpiece."

"You mistake, all day yesterday it was in my fob; but when I went out at six o'clock in the evening, I put it under the candlestick, because I was going among a crowd, and I feared it might be stolen."

"If you put it under the candlestick, it must be there yet;" and with feigned simplicity, which she was far from suspecting to be so transparent, she raised the very candlestick of the pair which ornamented the mantelpiece, under which Marat had concealed his watch.

"Yes, that is the candlestick, sure enough," said the young man; "but where is the watch?"

"No; I see it is no longer there. Perhaps you did not put it there, Monsieur Marat."

"But when I tell you —"

"Look for it carefully."

"Oh! I have looked carefully," said Marat, with an angry glance.

"Then you have lost it."

"But I tell you that yesterday I put it under that candlestick myself."

"Then some one must have entered," said Dame Grivette; "you see so many people, so many strangers."

"All an excuse!" cried Marat, more and more enraged. "You know very well that no one has been here since yesterday. No, no; my watch is gone where the silver top of my last cane went, where the little silver spoon you know of went, and my knife with the six blades. I am robbed, Dame Grivette! I have borne much, but I shall not tolerate this; so take notice."

"But, monsieur," said Dame Grivette, "do you mean to accuse me?"

"You ought to take care of my effects."

"I am not the only one to have the key."

"You are the portress."

"You give me a crown a month, and you expect to be as well served as if you had ten domestics."

"I do not care about being badly served, but I do care whether I am robbed or not."

"Monsieur, I am an honest woman."

"Yes, an honest woman whom I shall give in charge to the police if my watch is not found in an hour."

"To the police?"

"Yes."

"To the police,— an honest woman like me?"

"An honest woman! an honest woman!"

"Yes, — and of whom nothing bad can be said; do you hear that?"

"Come, come! enough of this, Dame Grivette."

"Ah! I thought that you suspected me, when you went out."

"I have suspected you ever since the top of my cane disappeared."

"Well! Monsieur Marat, I will tell you something, in my turn."

"What will you tell me?"

"While you were away I have consulted my neighbors."

"Your neighbors, — for what purpose?"

"Respecting your suspicions."

"I had said nothing of them to you at the time."

"But I saw them plainly."

"And the neighbors? I am curious to know what they said."

"They said that if you suspect me, and have even gone so far as to impart your suspicions to another person, you must pursue the affair to the end."

"Well!"

"That is to say, you must prove that the watch has been taken."

"It has been taken, since it was there, and is now gone."

"Yes, but taken by me, — taken by me, do you understand? Oh! justice requires proofs; your word will not be sufficient, Monsieur Marat; you are no more than one of ourselves, Monsieur Marat."

Balsamo, calm as ever, looked on during this scene. He saw that though Marat's conviction was not altered, he had, nevertheless, lowered his tone.

"Therefore," continued the portress, "if you do not render justice to my probity, if you do not make some reparation to my character, it is I who will send for the police, as our landlord just now advised me to do."

Marat bit his lips. He knew there was a real danger in this. The landlord was an old, rich, retired merchant. He lived on the third story; and the scandal-mongers of the quarter did not hesitate to assert that, some ten years before, he had not been indifferent to the charms of the portress, who was then kitchen-maid to his wife.

Now, Marat attended mysterious meetings. Marat was a young man of not very settled habits, besides being addicted to concealment and suspected by the police; and for all these reasons he was not anxious to have an affair with the commissary, seeing that it might tend to place him in the hands of Monsieur de Sartines, who liked much to read the papers of young men such as Marat, and to send the authors of such noble writings to houses of meditation such as Vincennes, the Bastille, Charenton and Bicêtre.

Marat, therefore, lowered his tone; but in proportion as he did so, the portress raised hers. The result was that this nervous and hysterical woman raged like a flame

which is fed by a current of air. Threats, oaths, cries, tears, — she employed all in turn; it was a regular tempest.

Then Balsamo judged that the time had come for him to interfere. He advanced toward the woman, and looking at her with an ominous and fiery glance, he stretched two fingers toward her, uttering, not so much with his lips as with his eyes, his thought, his whole will, a word which Marat could not hear.

Immediately Dame Grivette became silent, tottered, and, losing her balance, staggered backward, her eyes fearfully dilated, and fell upon the bed without uttering a word. After a short interval her eyes closed and opened again, but this time the pupils could not be seen; her tongue moved convulsively, but her body was motionless; and yet her hands trembled as if shaken by fever.

"Oh! oh!" said Marat; "like the wounded man in the hospital!"

"Yes."

"Then she is asleep?"

"Silence!" said Balsamo. Then, addressing Marat, "Monsieur," said he, "the moment has now come when all your incredulity must cease. Pick up that letter which this woman was bringing you, and which she dropped when she fell."

Marat obeyed. "Well?" he asked.

"Wait!" and taking the letter from Marat's hands, "You know from whom this letter comes?" asked Balsamo of the somnambulist.

"No, Monsieur," she replied.

Balsamo held the sealed letter close to the woman. "Read it to Monsieur Marat, who wishes to know the contents."

"She cannot read," said Marat.

"Yes, but you can read?"

"Of course."

"Well, read it, and she will read it after you, in proportion as the words are engraven upon your mind."

Marat broke the seal of the letter and read it, while Dame Grivette, standing, and trembling beneath the all-powerful will of Balsamo, repeated, word for word, as Marat read them to himself, the following words: —

My dear Hippocrates, — Apelles has just finished his portrait; he has sold it for fifty francs, and these fifty francs are to be eaten to-day at the tavern in the Rue St. Jacques. Will you come?

P. S. — It is understood part is to be drunk.

Your friend,
L. David.

It was word for word what was written. Marat let the paper fall from his hand.

"Well," said Balsamo, "you see that Dame Grivette also has a soul, and that this soul wakes while she sleeps."

"And a strange soul," said Marat, — "a soul which can read when the body cannot."

"Because the soul knows everything; because the soul can reproduce by reflection. Try to make her read this when she is awake, — that is to say, when the body has wrapped the soul in its shadow, — and you will see."

Marat was dumb; all his materialistic philosophy rebelled within him, but he could not find a reply.

"Now," continued Balsamo, "we will pass on to what interests you most, — that is to say, to what has become of your watch. Dame Grivette," said he, turning to her, "who has taken Monsieur Marat's watch?"

The somnambulist made a violent gesture of denial. "I do not know," said she.

"You know perfectly well," persisted Balsamo, "and

you shall tell me." Then, with a more decided exertion of his will, "Who has taken Monsieur Marat's watch? Speak!"

"Dame Grivette has not stolen Monsieur Marat's watch. Why does Monsieur Marat believe she has?"

"If it is not she who has taken it, tell me who has?"

"I do not know."

"You see," said Marat, "conscience is an impenetrable refuge."

"Well, since you have only this last doubt," said Balsamo, "you shall be convinced." Then, turning again to the portress, "Tell me who took the watch; I will it."

"Come, come," said Marat; "what you ask is an impossibility!"

"You heard?" said Balsamo; "I have said that I will it."

Then, under the pressure of this imperious command, the unhappy woman began to wring her hands and arms as if she were mad; a shudder like that of an epileptic fit ran through her whole body; her mouth was distorted with a hideous expression of terror and weakness; she threw herself back, rigid, as if she were in a painful convulsion, and fell upon the bed.

"No, no," said she, "I will rather die!"

"Well," said Balsamo, with a burst of anger which made the fire flash from his eyes, "you shall die, if necessary, but you shall speak. Your silence and your obstinacy are sufficient indications for me; but for an incredulous person we must have irrefragable proofs. Speak! I will it; who has taken the watch?"

The nervous excitement was at its height; all the strength and power of the somnambulist struggled against Balsamo's will; inarticulate cries escaped from her lips, which were stained with a reddish foam.

"She will fall into an epileptic fit," said Marat.

"Fear nothing; it is the demon of falsehood who is in her, and who refuses to come out!"

Then, turning toward the woman, and throwing into her face as much magnetic fluid as his hands could contain, "Speak!" said he; "who has taken the watch?"

"Dame Grivette," replied the somnambulist, in an almost inaudible voice.

"When did she take it?"

"Yesterday evening."

"Where was it?"

"Under the candlestick."

"What has she done with it?"

"She has taken it to the Rue St. Jacques."

"Where in the Rue St. Jacques?"

"To No. 29."

"Which story?"

"The fifth."

"To whom did she give it?"

"To a shoemaker's apprentice."

"What is his name?"

"Simon."

"What is this man to her?"

The woman was silent.

"What is this man to her?"

The somnambulist was still silent.

"What is this man to her?" repeated Balsamo.

The same silence.

Balsamo extended toward her his hand impregnated with the fluid, and the unfortunate woman, overwhelmed by this terrible attack, had only strength to murmur, "Her lover."

Marat uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Silence!" said Balsamo; "allow conscience to speak."

Then, continuing to address the woman, who was trembling all over, and bathed in perspiration, "And who advised Dame Grivette to steal the watch?" he asked.

"No one. She raised the candlestick by accident; she law the watch, and the demon tempted her."

"Did she do it from want?"

"No; for she did not sell the watch."

"She gave it away, then?"

"Yes."

"To Simon?"

The somnambulist made a violent effort.

"To Simon," said she.

Then she covered her face with her hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

Balsamo glanced at Marat, who, with gaping mouth, disordered hair, and dilated eyes, was gazing at the fearful spectacle.

"Well, Monsieur," said Balsamo, "you see at last the struggle between the body and the soul. You see conscience forced to yield, even in a redoubt which it had believed impregnable. Do you confess now that God has forgotten nothing in this world, and that he is in everything? Then deny no longer that there is a conscience; deny no longer that there is a soul; deny no longer the unknown, young man! Above all, do not deny faith, which is power supreme. And since you are ambitious, Monsieur Marat, study; speak little, think much, and do not judge your superiors lightly. Adieu! my words have opened a vast field before you; cultivate this field, which contains hidden treasures. Adieu! Happy will you be if you can conquer the demon of incredulity which is in you, as I have conquered the demon of falsehood which was in this woman;" and with these words, which caused

the blush of shame to tinge the young man's cheeks, he left the room.

Marat did not even think of taking leave of him. But after his first stupor was over, he perceived that Dame Grivette was still sleeping. This sleep struck terror to his soul. Marat would rather have seen a corpse upon his bed, even if Monsieur de Sartines should interpret the fact after his own fashion.

He gazed on this lifeless form, these turned-up eyes, these palpitations, and he felt afraid. His fear increased when the living corpse rose, advanced toward him, took his hand, and said, "Come with me, Monsieur Marat."

"Whither?"

"To the Rue St. Jacques."

"Why?"

"Come, come; he commands me to take you."

Marat, who had fallen upon a chair, rose. Then Dame Grivette, still asleep, opened the door, and descended the stairs with the stealthy pace of a cat, scarcely touching the steps. Marat followed, fearing every moment that she would fall, and in falling break her neck. Having reached the foot of the stairs, she crossed the threshold and entered the street, still followed by the young man, whom she led in this manner to the house and the garret she had pointed out. She knocked at the door; Marat felt his heart beat so violently that he thought it must be audible.

A man was in the garret; he opened the door. In this man Marat recognized a workman of from twenty-five to thirty years of age, whom he had several times seen in the porter's lodge. Seeing Dame Grivette followed by Marat, the man started back. But the somnambulist walked straight to the bed, and putting her hand under the thin bolster, she drew out the watch, which she gave

to Marat, while the shoemaker Simon, pale with terror, dared not utter a word, and watched with alarmed gaze the least movements of this woman, whom he believed to be mad.

Scarcely had her hand touched Marat's, in returning him the watch, when she gave a deep sigh and murmured: "He awakes me! He awakes me!"

Her nerves relaxed like a cable freed from the capstan, the vital spark again animated her eyes, and finding herself face to face with Marat, her hand in his, and still holding the watch, — that is to say, the irrefragable proof of her crime, — she fell upon the floor of the garret in a deep swoon.

"Does conscience really exist, then?" asked Marat of himself as he left the room, doubt in his heart, and revery in his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS.

WHILE Marat was employing his time so profitably in philosophizing on conscience and a dual existence, another philosopher in the Rue Plastrière was also busy in reconstructing, piece by piece, every part of the preceding evening's adventures, and asking himself if he were or were not a very wicked man. Rousseau, with his elbows leaning upon the table, and his head drooping heavily on his left shoulder, was deep in thought. His philosophical and political works, "Émile" and "Le Contrat Social," were lying open before him.

From time to time, when his reflections required it, he stooped down to turn over the leaves of these books, which he knew by heart. "Ah! good heavens!" said he, reading a paragraph from "Émile" upon liberty of conscience, "what incendiary expressions! What philosophy! Just Heaven! was there ever in the world a firebrand like me? What!" he added, clasping his hands above his head, "have I written such violent outbursts against the throne, — the altar of society? I can no longer be surprised if some dark and brooding minds have taken advantage of my sophisms, and have gone astray in the paths which I have strewed for them with all the flowers of rhetoric. I have acted as the disturber of society!"

He rose from his chair and paced the room in great agitation. "I have," he continued, "abused those men

in power who exercise tyranny over authors. Fool, barbarian that I was! Those people are right, — a thousand times right! What am I, if not a man dangerous to the State? My words, written to enlighten the masses, — at least, such was the pretext I gave myself, — have become a torch which will set the world on fire. I have sown discourses on the inequality of ranks, projects of universal fraternity, plans of education; and now I reap a harvest of passions so ferocious that they would overturn the whole framework of society, of intestine wars capable of depopulating the world, and of manners so barbarous that they would roll back the civilization of ten centuries! Oh, I am a great criminal!"

He read once more a page of his "Savoyard Vicar." "Yes, that is it! 'Let us unite to form plans for our happiness.' I have written it! 'Let us give our virtues the force which others give to their vices.' I have written that also." And Rousseau became still more agitated and unhappy than before.

"Thus, by my fault," said he, "brothers are united to brothers, and one day or other some of these concealed places of meeting will be invaded by the police; the whole nest of these men, who have sworn to eat one another in case of treachery, will be arrested, and one bolder than the others will take my book from his pocket and will say: 'What do you complain of? We are disciples of Monsieur Rousseau; we are going through a course of philosophy?' Oh, how Voltaire will laugh at that! There is no fear of that courtier's ever getting into such a wasps' nest!" The idea that Voltaire would ridicule him, put the Genevese philosopher into a violent rage. "I a conspirator!" he muttered; "I must be in my dotage, certainly! Am I not, in truth, a fine conspirator?"

He was at this point when Thérèse entered with the

breakfast; but he did not see her. She perceived that he was attentively reading a passage in the "Réveries d'un Solitaire." "Very good," said she, placing the hot milk noisily upon the very book; "my peacock is looking at himself in the glass! Monsieur reads his books! Monsieur Rousseau admires himself!"

"Come, Thérèse," said the philosopher, "patience, — leave me; I am in no humor for laughing."

"Oh, yes, it is magnificent, is it not?" said she, mockingly. "You are delighted with yourself. What vanity authors have! and how angry they are to see it in us poor women! If I happen only to look in my little mirror, Monsieur grumbles, and calls me a coquette."

She proceeded in this strain, making him the most unhappy man in the world, as if Rousseau had not been richly enough endowed by nature in this respect. He drank his milk without moistening his bread. He reflected.

"Very good," said she; "there you are, thinking again. You are going to write another book full of horrible things."

Rousseau shuddered.

"You dream," continued Thérèse, "of your ideal women, and you write books which young girls ought not to read, or else profane works which ought to be burned by the hands of the common executioner."

The martyr shuddered again. Thérèse had touched him to the quick. "No," he replied; "I will write nothing more which can cause an evil thought. On the contrary, I wish to write a book which all honest people will read with transports of joy."

"Oh, oh!" said Thérèse, taking away the cup, "that is impossible; your mind is full of obscene thoughts. Only the other day I heard you read some passage or other, and in it you spoke of women whom you adored. You are a satyr; a magus!"

This word "magus" was one of the most abusive in Thérèse's vocabulary; it always made Rousseau shudder. "There, there now!" said he; "my dear woman, you will find that you will be satisfied. I intend to write that I have found the means of regenerating the world without causing pain to a single individual by the changes which will be effected. Yes, yes; I will mature this project. No revolutions! Great heavens! my good Thérèse, no revolutions!"

"Well, we shall see," said the housekeeper. "Stay! some one rings."

Thérèse went out, and returned almost immediately with a handsome young man, whom she requested to wait in the outer apartment. Then rejoining Rousseau, who was already taking notes with his pencil, "Be quick," said she, "and lock up all these infamous things. There is some one who wishes to see you."

"Who is it?"

"A nobleman of the court."

"Did he not tell you his name?"

"A good idea! as if I would receive a stranger!"

"Tell it me, then."

"Monsieur de Coigny."

"Monsieur de Coigny!" exclaimed Rousseau; "Monsieur de Coigny, gentleman-in-waiting to the dauphin?"

"It must be the same; a charming youth, a most amiable young man."

"I will go, Thérèse."

Rousseau gave a glance at himself in the mirror, dusted his coat, wiped his slippers, which were only old shoes trodden down in the heels by long wear, and entered the dining-room, where the gentleman was waiting. The latter had not sat down. He was looking, with a sort of curiosity, at the dried plants pasted by Rousseau upon

paper, and enclosed in frames of black wood. At the noise Rousseau made in entering, he turned, and bowing most courteously, "Have I the honor," said he, "of speaking to Monsieur Rousseau?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the philosopher, in a morose voice, not unmingled, however, with a kind of admiration for the remarkable beauty and unaffected elegance of the person before him.

Monsieur de Coigny was, in fact, one of the handsomest and most accomplished gentlemen in France. It must have been for him, and such as he, that the costume of that period was invented. It displayed to the greatest advantage the symmetry and beauty of his well-turned leg, his broad shoulders, and deep chest; it gave a majestic air to his exquisitely formed head, and added to the ivory whiteness of his aristocratic hands.

His examination satisfied Rousseau, who, like a true artist, admired the beautiful wherever he met with it.

"Monsieur," said he, "what can I do for you?"

"You have been perhaps informed, Monsieur," replied the young nobleman, "that I am the Comte de Coigny. I may add that I come from her Royal Highness the Dauphiness."

Rousseau reddened and bowed. Thérèse, who was standing in a corner of the dining-room, with her hands in her pockets, gazed with complacent eyes at the handsome messenger of the greatest princess in France.

"Her Royal Highness sends to me! For what purpose?" asked Rousseau. "But take a chair, if you please, Monsieur."

Rousseau sat down, and Monsieur de Coigny drew forward a straw-bottomed chair and followed his example.

"Monsieur, here is the fact. The other day, when his Majesty dined at Trianon, he expressed a good deal of

admiration for your music, which is indeed charming. His Majesty sang your prettiest airs, and the dauphiness, who is always anxious to please his Majesty in every respect, thought that it might give him pleasure to see one of your comic operas performed in the theatre at Trianon."

Rousseau bowed low.

"I come, therefore, to ask you, from the dauphiness —"

"Oh, Monsieur!" interrupted Rousseau, "my permission has nothing to do in the matter. My pieces, and the airs belonging to them, are the property of the theatre where they are represented. The permission must therefore be sought from the comedians, and her Royal Highness will, I am assured, find no obstacles in that quarter. The actors will be too happy to play and sing before his Majesty and the court."

"That is not precisely what I am commissioned to request, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Coigny. "Her Royal Highness the Dauphiness wishes to give a more complete and more recherché entertainment to his Majesty. She knows all your operas, Monsieur."

Another bow from Rousseau.

"And sings them charmingly."

Rousseau bit his lips. "It is too much honor, Monsieur," he stammered.

"Now," pursued Monsieur de Coigny, "as several ladies of the court are excellent musicians and sing delightfully, and as several gentlemen also have studied music with some success, whichever of your operas the dauphiness may choose will be performed by this company of ladies and gentlemen, the principal actors being their Royal Highnesses."

Rousseau bounded in his chair. "I assure you, Monsieur," said he, "that this is a signal honor conferred

upon me, and I beg you will offer my most humble thanks to the dauphiness."

"Oh! that is not all," said Monsieur de Coigny, with a smile.

"Ah!"

"The troupe thus composed is more illustrious, certainly, than that usually employed, but also more inexperienced. The superintendence and the advice of a master are therefore indispensable. The performance ought to be worthy of the august spectator who will occupy the royal box, and also of the illustrious author."

Rousseau rose to bow again. This time the compliment had touched him, and he saluted Monsieur de Coigny most graciously.

"For this purpose, Monsieur," continued the gentleman-in-waiting, "her Royal Highness requests your company at Trianon, to superintend the general rehearsal of the work."

"Oh!" said Rousseau, "her Royal Highness cannot surely think of such a thing. I at Trianon?"

"Well?" said Monsieur de Coigny, with the most natural air possible.

"Oh! Monsieur, you are a man of taste and judgment; you have more tact than the majority of men: answer me, on your conscience, is not the idea of Rousseau, the philosopher, the outlaw, the misanthrope, attending at court, enough to make the whole cabal split their sides with laughter?"

"I do not see," replied Monsieur de Coigny, coldly, "how the laughter and the remarks of that foolish set which persecutes you should disturb the repose of a gallant man, and an author who may lay claim to be the first in the kingdom. If you have this weakness, Monsieur Rousseau, conceal it carefully; it alone would be sufficient to

raise a laugh at your expense. As to what remarks may be made, you will confess that they may be modified by the fact that the pleasure and the wishes of her Royal Highness the Dauphiness, presumptive heiress of the French kingdom, are in question."

"Certainly," said Rousseau, "certainly."

"Can it be, possibly, a lingering feeling of false shame?" said Monsieur de Coigny, smiling. "Because you have been severe upon kings, do you fear to humanize yourself? Ah! Monsieur Rousseau, you have given valuable lessons to the human race, but I hope you do not hate them. And, besides, you certainly except the ladies of the blood royal."

"Monsieur, you are very kind to press me so much; but think of my position, — I live retired, alone, unhappy."

Thérèse made a grimace. "Unhappy!" said she; "he is hard to please!"

"Whatever effort I may make, there will always be something in my features and manner unpleasing to the eyes of the king and the princesses, who seek only joy and happiness. What should I do there; what should I say?"

"One might suspect that you distrust yourself! But, Monsieur, do you not think that he who has written the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' and the 'Confessions' must have more talent for speaking and acting than all of us others put together, no matter what position we occupy?"

"I assure you, Monsieur, it is impossible."

"That word, Monsieur, is not known to princes."

"And for that very reason, Monsieur, I shall remain at home."

"Monsieur, you will not inflict on me — the rash messenger who undertook to give satisfaction to Madame the Dauphiness — the mortal injury of obliging me to return

to Versailles vanquished and ashamed? It would be such a blow to me that I should immediately retire into exile. Come, my dear Monsieur Rousseau, grant to me, a man full of the deepest sympathy for your works, this favor, — a favor which you would refuse to supplicating kings."

"Monsieur, your kindness gains my heart, your eloquence is irresistible, and your voice moves me more than I can tell you."

"Will you allow yourself to be persuaded?"

"No, I cannot, — no, decidedly; my health forbids such a journey."

"A journey! Oh! Monsieur Rousseau, what are you thinking of? An hour and a quarter in a carriage!"

"Yes, for you and your prancing horses."

"But all the equipages of the court are at your disposal, Monsieur Rousseau. The dauphiness charged me to tell you that there is an apartment prepared for you at Trianon; for she is unwilling that you should have to return so late to Paris. The dauphin, who knows all your works by heart, said, before the whole court, that he would be proud to show the room in his palace where Monsieur Rousseau had slept."

Thérèse uttered a cry of admiration, not for Rousseau, but for the good prince.

Rousseau could not withstand this last mark of goodwill. "I must surrender," said he, "for never have I been so well attacked."

"Your heart only is vanquished, Monsieur," replied De Coigny; "your mind is impregnable."

"I will go then, Monsieur, in obedience to the wishes of her Royal Highness."

"Oh, Monsieur, receive my personal thanks! As regards the dauphiness's, permit me to abstain. She would feel annoyed at being forestalled, as she means to pay

them to you in person this evening. Besides, you know, it is the man's part to thank a young and adorable lady who is good enough to make advances to him."

"True, Monsieur," replied Rousseau, smiling; "but old men have the privilege of pretty women, — they are sought after."

"If you will name your hour, Monsieur Rousseau, I will send my carriage for you; or rather, I will come for you myself."

"No, thank you, Monsieur. I must positively refuse your kind offer. I will go to Trianon, but let me go freely, in my own way. From this moment leave me to myself. I shall come, that is all. Tell me the hour."

"What, Monsieur! you will not allow me to introduce you? I know I am not worthy of the honor, and that a name like yours needs no announcement."

"Monsieur, I am aware that at court you are more than I am anywhere in the world. I do not refuse your offer, therefore, from any motives personal to yourself, but I love my liberty. I wish to go as if I were merely taking a walk, and — in short, that is my ultimatum."

"Monsieur, I bow to your decision, and should be most unwilling to displease you in any particular. The rehearsal begins at six o'clock."

"Very well. At a quarter before six I shall be at Trianon."

"But by what conveyance?"

"That is my affair, — these are my horses." He pointed to his legs, which were still well formed, and clad with some pretension.

"Five leagues!" said Monsieur de Coigny, alarmed; "you will be exhausted. Take care, — it will be a fatiguing evening!"

"In that case I have my carriage and my horses also,

—a fraternal carriage, the popular vehicle, which belongs to my neighbor as well as to myself, and which costs only fifteen sous."

"Oh, good heavens! The omnibus! You make me shudder!"

"Its benches, which seem to you so hard, are to me like the Sybarite's couch. To me they seem stuffed with down, or with rose-leaves. Adieu, Monsieur, till this evening!"

Monsieur de Coigny, seeing himself thus dismissed, took his leave after a multitude of thanks, instructions more or less precise, and repeated offers of service. He descended the dark staircase, accompanied by Rousseau to the landing, and by Thérèse half-way down the stairs. He entered his carriage, which was waiting in the street, and drove back to Versailles, smiling to himself.

Thérèse returned to the apartment, slamming the door with angry violence, which foretold a storm for Rousseau.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUSSEAU'S TOILET.

When Monsieur de Coigny was gone, Rousseau, whose ideas this visit had entirely changed, threw himself into a little armchair, with a deep sigh, and said in a sleepy tone: "Oh, how tiresome this is! How these people weary me with their persecutions!"

Thérèse caught the last words as she entered, and placing herself before Rousseau, "How proud we are!" said she.

"I?" asked Rousseau, surprised.

"Yes; you are a vain fellow, — a hypocrite!"

"I?"

"Yes, you; you are enchanted to go to court, and you conceal your joy under this pretended indifference."

"Oh, good heavens!" replied Rousseau, shrugging his shoulders, and humiliated at being so truly described.

"Do you not wish to make me believe that it is not a great honor for you to perform for the king the airs which you thump here upon your spinet, idler that you are?"

Rousseau looked angrily at his wife. "You are a simpleton," said he; "it is no honor for a man such as I am to appear before a king. To what is this man indebted that he is on the throne? To a caprice of nature, which gave him a queen as his mother; but I am worthy of being called before the king to minister to his recreation.

It is to my labor I owe it, and to the fame acquired by my labor."

Thérèse was not a woman to be so easily conquered. "I wish Monsieur de Sartines heard you talking in this style; he would give you a lodging in Bicêtre, or a cell at Charenton."

"Because this Monsieur de Sartines is a tyrant in the pay of another tyrant, and because man is defenceless against tyrants with the aid of his genius alone. But if Monsieur de Sartines were to persecute me —"

"Well, what then?" asked Thérèse.

"Ah, yes!" sighed Rousseau; "yes, I know that would delight my enemies!"

"Why have you enemies?" continued Thérèse. "Because you are ill-natured, and because you have attacked every one. Ah, Monsieur de Voltaire knows how to make friends, he does!"

"True!" said Rousseau, with an angelic smile.

"But Monsieur de Voltaire is a gentleman; he is the intimate friend of the king of Prussia; he has horses, he is rich, and lives in his chateau at Ferney. And all that he owes to his merit. Therefore, when he goes to court, he does not act the disdainful man, he is quite at home there."

"And do you think," said Rousseau, "that I shall not be at home there? Think you that I do not know where all the money that is spent there comes from, or that I am duped by the respect which is paid to the master? Oh! my good woman, who judgest everything falsely, remember, if I am disdainful, it is because I really feel contempt; remember that if I despise the pomp of these courtiers, it is because they have stolen their riches!"

"Stolen!" said Thérèse, with inexpressible indignation.

"Yes, stolen, — from you, from me, from every one. All the gold they have upon their fine clothes should be

restored to the unhappy ones who want bread. That is the reason why I, who know all these things, go so reluctantly to court."

"I do not say that the people are happy; but the king is always the king."

"Well, I obey him; what more does he want?"

"Ah, you obey because you are afraid! You must not say in my hearing that you go against your will, or that you are a brave man; for if so, I shall reply that you are a hypocrite, and that you are very glad to go."

"I do not fear anything!" said Rousseau, superbly.

"Good! Just go and say to the king one quarter of what you have been telling me the last half-hour."

"I shall assuredly do so, if my feelings prompt me."

"You?"

"Yes. Have I ever recoiled?"

"Bah! You dare not take a bone from a cat when she is gnawing it, for fear she should scratch you! What would you be if surrounded by guards and swordsmen? Look you, I know you as well as if I were your mother. You will just now go and shave yourself afresh, oil your hair, and make yourself beautiful; you will display your leg to the utmost advantage; you will put on your interesting little winking expression, because your eyes are small and round, and if you opened them naturally, that would be seen, while when you wink, you make people believe that they are as large as carriage entrances. You will ask me for your silk stockings, you will put on your chocolate-colored coat with steel buttons, and your beautiful new wig; you will order a coach, and my philosopher will go and be adored by the ladies! And to-morrow — ah, to-morrow! — there will be such ecstatic reveries, such interesting languor! You will have come

back amorous; you will sigh and write verses, and you will dilute your coffee with your tears. Oh, how well I know you!"

"You are wrong, my dear," said Rousseau. "I tell you I am reluctantly obliged to go to court. I go because, after all, I fear to cause scandal, as every honest citizen should. Moreover, I am not one of those who refuse to acknowledge the supremacy of one citizen in a republic; but as to making advances, as to brushing my new coat against the gold spangles of these gentlemen of the Œil-de-Bœuf, — no, no! I shall do nothing of the sort; and if you catch me doing so, laugh at me as much as you please."

"Then you will not dress?" said Thérèse, sarcastically.

"No."

"You will not put on your new wig?"

"No."

"You will not wink with your little eyes?"

"I tell you I will go like a free man, without affectation and without fear. I will go to court as if I were going to the theatre; and let the actors like me or not, I care not for them."

"Oh! you will at least trim your beard," said Thérèse; "it is half a foot long!"

"I tell you I shall make no change."

Thérèse burst into so loud and prolonged a laugh that Rousseau was obliged to take refuge in the next room. But the housekeeper had not finished her persecutions; she had them of all colors and kinds. She opened the closet and took out his best coat, his clean linen, and beautifully polished shoes. She spread all these articles out upon the bed and over the chairs in the apartment; but Rousseau did not seem to pay the least attention.

At last Thérèse said: "Come, it is time for you to dress.

A court toilet is no small matter. You will have barely time to reach Versailles at the appointed hour."

"I have told you, Thérèse, that I shall do very well as I am. It is the same dress in which I present myself every day among my fellow-citizens. A king is but a citizen like myself."

"Come, come!" said Thérèse, trying to tempt him and bring him to her purpose by artful insinuation; "do not pout, Jacques, and don't be foolish. Here are your clothes. Your razor is ready; I have sent for the barber, in case your nerves to-day —"

"Thank you, my dear," replied Rousseau; "I will just give myself a brush, and I will take my shoes, because I cannot go out in slippers."

"Is he going to be firm, I wonder?" thought Thérèse.

She tried to coax him, sometimes by coquetry, sometimes by persuasion, and sometimes by the violence of her raillery. But Rousseau knew her, and saw the snare. He knew that the moment he should give way, he would be unmercifully disgraced and ridiculed by his better-half. He determined, therefore, not to give way, and abstained from looking at the fine clothes, which would set off what he termed his natural advantages.

Thérèse watched him. She had only one resource left, — this was the glance which Rousseau never failed to give in the glass before he went out; for the philosopher was neat to excess, if there can be excess in neatness.

But Rousseau continued to be on his guard; and as he had caught Thérèse's watchful look, he turned his back to the looking-glass. The hour arrived; the philosopher had filled his head with all the disagreeable remarks he could think of to say to the king. He repeated some scraps of them to himself while he buckled his shoes, then tucked

his hat under his arm, seized his cane, and taking advantage of a moment when Thérèse could not see him, he pulled down his coat and his waistcoat with both hands, to smooth the creases.

Thérèse now returned, handed him a handkerchief, which he plunged into his huge pocket, and then accompanied him to the landing-place, saying : "Come, Jacques, be reasonable ; you look quite frightful, — you have the air of a counterfeiter."

"Adieu ! " said Rousseau.

"You look like a thief, Monsieur," said Thérèse ; "take care ! "

"Take care of fire," said Rousseau, "and do not touch my papers."

"You have just the air of a spy, I assure you ! " said Thérèse, in despair.

Rousseau made no reply ; he descended the steps singing, and favored by the obscurity, he gave his hat a brush with his sleeve, smoothed his shirt-frill with his left hand, and touched up his toilet with a rapid but skilful movement.

Arrived at the foot of the stairs, he boldly stepped into the mud of the Rue Plastrière, but walking on tiptoe, and reached the Champs-Elysées, where those honest vehicles which for the sake of exactness we will call *pataches* were stationed, and which, so late as ten years ago, still carried, or rather bundled, from Paris to Versailles those travellers who were obliged to use economy.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIDE-SCENES OF TRIANON.

The adventures of Rousseau's journey are of no importance. A Swiss, an assistant-clerk, a citizen, and an abbé were of course among his travelling companions.

He arrived at half-past five. The court was already assembled at Trianon, and the performers were going over their parts while waiting for the king; as to the author, no one thought of him. Some were aware that Monsieur Rousseau, of Geneva, was to come to direct the rehearsal; but they took no greater interest in seeing Monsieur Rousseau than they would in seeing Monsieur Rameau, or Monsieur Marmontel, or any other of those singular animals, to a sight of which the courtiers sometimes treated themselves in their drawing-rooms or country houses.

Rousseau was received by the usher-in-waiting, who had been ordered by Monsieur de Coigny to inform him as soon as the philosopher should arrive. This young nobleman hastened with his usual courtesy, and received Rousseau with most amiable greetings. But as soon as he had taken a comprehensive view of Rousseau's person, he began to stare at him with astonishment; and he could not refrain from repeating the examination.

Rousseau was dusty, pale, and dishevelled, and his paleness rendered conspicuous such a beard as no master of the ceremonies had ever seen reflected in the mirrors of Versailles.

Rousseau felt deeply embarrassed under Monsieur de Coigny's scrutiny, but more embarrassed still when, approaching the hall of the theatre, he saw the profusion of splendid dresses, valuable lace, diamonds, and blue ribbons, which, with the gilding of the hall, produced the effect of a bouquet of flowers in an immense basket.

Rousseau felt ill at ease also when he had breathed this perfumed atmosphere, so intoxicating to plebeian nerves. Yet he was obliged to proceed and put a bold face on the matter. Multitudes of eyes were fixed upon him who thus formed a stain, as it were, on the polish of the assembly. Monsieur de Coigny, still preceding him, led him to the orchestra, where the musicians were awaiting him. When there, he felt rather relieved, and while his music was performed, he seriously reflected that the worst danger was past, that the step was taken, and that all the reasoning in the world could now be of no avail.

Already the dauphiness was on the stage, in her costume as Colette; she waited for Colin. Monsieur de Coigny was changing his dress in his box. Suddenly the king entered, surrounded by a crowd of bending heads. Louis smiled, and seemed to be in the best humor possible. The dauphin seated himself at his right hand, and the Comte de Provence, arriving soon after, took his place on the left. On a sign from the king, the fifty persons who composed the assembly, private as it was, took their seats.

"Well, why do you not begin?" asked Louis.

"Sire," said the dauphiness, "the shepherds and shepherdesses are not yet dressed; we are waiting for them."

"They can perform in their usual dresses," said the king.

"No, Sire," replied the dauphiness; "for we wish to try the stage-dresses and costumes by candle-light, to be certain of the effect."

"You are right, Madame," said the king; "then let us take a stroll;" and Louis rose, to make the circuit of the corridor and the stage. Besides, he was rather uneasy at not seeing Madame Dubarry.

When the king had left the box, Rousseau contemplated in a melancholy mood and with an aching heart the empty hall and his own solitary position, — it was a singular contrast to the reception he had anticipated. He had pictured to himself that on his entrance all the groups would open before him; that the curiosity of the courtiers would be even more importunate and more significant than that of the Parisians; he had feared questions and presentations; and lo, no one paid any attention to him! He thought that his long beard was not yet long enough, that rags would not have been more remarked than his old clothes, and he applauded himself for not having been so ridiculous as to aim at elegance. But in the bottom of his heart he felt humiliated at being thus reduced to the simple post of leader of the orchestra. Suddenly an officer approached, and asked him if he was not Monsieur Rousseau?

"Yes, Monsieur," he replied.

"Her Royal Highness the Dauphiness wishes to speak to you, Monsieur," said the officer.

Rousseau rose, much agitated.

The dauphiness was waiting for him. She held in her hand the air of Colette, —

"My happiness is gone."

The moment she saw Rousseau she advanced toward him. The philosopher bowed very humbly, saying to himself that his bow was for the woman, not for the princess.

The dauphiness, on the contrary, was as gracious to the savage philosopher as she would have been to the most

finished gentleman in Europe. She requested his advice about the inflection she ought to give to the third line, —

"Colin leaves me."

Rousseau forthwith began to develop a theory of declamation and melody, which, learned as it was, was interrupted by the noisy arrival of the king and several courtiers.

Louis entered the room in which the dauphiness was taking her lesson from the philosopher. The first impulse of the king when he saw this carelessly dressed person was the same that Monsieur de Coigny had manifested; only Monsieur de Coigny knew Rousseau, and the king did not. He stared, therefore, long and steadily at our freeman while still receiving the thanks and compliments of the dauphiness. This look, stamped with royal authority; this look, not accustomed to be lowered before any one, — produced a powerful effect upon Rousseau, whose quick eye was timid and unsteady.

The dauphiness waited until the king had finished his scrutiny; then, advancing toward Rousseau, she said, "Will your Majesty allow me to present our author to you?"

"Your author?" said the king, affecting to search his memory.

During this short dialogue Rousseau was upon burning coals. The king's eye had successively rested upon and burned — like the sun's rays under a powerful lens — the long beard, the dubious shirt-frill, the dusty garb, and the old wig of the greatest writer in his kingdom.

The dauphiness took pity on Rousseau. "Monsieur Jean Jacques Rousseau, Sire," said she, "the author of the charming opera we are going to execute before your Majesty."

The king raised his head. "Ah!" said he, coldly, "Monsieur Rousseau, I greet you." And he continued to look at him in such a manner as to point out all the imperfections of his dress.

Rousseau asked himself how he ought to salute the king of France, without being a courtier, but also without impoliteness, for he admitted that he was in that prince's house. But while he was making these reflections, the king addressed him with that graceful ease of princes who have said everything when they have uttered an agreeable or a disagreeable remark to the person before them. Rousseau, petrified, had at first stood speechless. All the phrases he had prepared for the tyrant were forgotten.

"Monsieur Rousseau," said the king, still looking at his coat and wig, "you have composed some charming music, which has caused me to pass very pleasant moments."

Then the king, in a voice which was diametrically opposed to all harmony and melody, began singing, —

"'Had I turned a willing ear,
The gallants of the town to hear,
Ah! I had found with ease
Other lovers then to please.'

"It is charming!" said the king, when he had finished.

Rousseau bowed.

"I do not know if I shall sing it well," said the dauphiness.

Rousseau turned toward the dauphiness to make some remark in reply; but the king had begun again, and was singing the romance of Colin: —

"'From my hut, obscure and cold,
Care is absent never;
Whether storm, or sun, or cold,
Suffering, toil, forever.'"

His Majesty's singing was very trying to a musician. Rousseau, half flattered by the monarch's good memory, half wounded by his detestable execution, looked like a monkey nibbling an onion, — crying on one side of his face, and laughing on the other. The dauphiness preserved her composure with that imperturbable self-possession which is found only at court.

The king, without the least embarrassment, continued:

"'If thou 'lt come to cast thy lot
In thy Colin's humble cot,
My sweet shepherdess, Colette.
I 'll bid adieu to all regret.'"

Rousseau felt the color rising to his face.

"Tell me, Monsieur Rousseau," said the king, "is it true that you sometimes dress in the costume of an Armenian?"

Rousseau blushed more deeply than before, and his tongue was so glued to his throat that not for a kingdom could he have pronounced a word at this moment.

The king continued to sing, without waiting for a reply:

"'Ah! but little, as times go,
Doth love know
What he 'd let, or what he 'd hinder.'

"You live in the Rue Plastrière, I believe, Monsieur Rousseau?" said the king.

Rousseau made a gesture in the affirmative with his head, but his strength could go no farther. Never had he summoned to his support so much of his reserved energy. The king hummed, —

"'She is a child,
She is a child.'

"It is said you are on bad terms with Voltaire, Monsieur Rousseau?"

At this blow Rousseau lost the little presence of mind he had remaining, and was totally put out of countenance. The king did not seem to have much pity for him; and continuing his ferocious melomania, he moved off, singing:

"'Come, dance with me beneath the elms;
Young maidens, come, be merry,'"

with orchestral accompaniments which would have killed Apollo, as the latter killed Marsyas.

Rousseau remained alone in the centre of the room. The dauphiness had gone away to finish her toilet.

Rousseau, trembling and confused, regained the corridor; but on his way he stumbled against a couple dazzling with diamonds, flowers, and lace, who filled up the entire width of the corridor, although the young man pressed his lovely companion tenderly to his side.

The young woman, with her fluttering laces, her towering headdress, her fan, and her perfumes, was radiant as a star. It was she against whom Rousseau brushed in passing.

The young man, slender, elegant, and charming, with his blue ribbon rustling against his English shirt-frill, every now and then burst into a laugh of most engaging frankness, and then suddenly interrupted it with little confidential whispers, which made the lady laugh in her turn, and showed that they were on excellent terms.

Rousseau recognized the Comtesse Dubarry in this beautiful lady, — this seducing creature; and the moment he perceived her, true to his habit of concentrating all his thoughts on a single object, he no longer saw her companion. The young man with the blue ribbon was no other than the Comte d'Artois, who was merrily toying with his grandfather's favorite.

When Madame Dubarry perceived Rousseau's dark figure, she exclaimed, "Ah, good heavens!"

"What!" said the Comte d'Artois, also looking at the philosopher; and already he had stretched out his hand to make way for his companion.

"Monsieur Rousseau!" exclaimed Madame Dubarry.

"Rousseau of Geneva?" said the Comte d'Artois, in the tone of a schoolboy in the holidays.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the countess.

"Ah, good-day, Monsieur Rousseau!" said the young fop, seeing Rousseau making a despairing effort to force a passage, — "good-day; we are going to hear your music."

"Monseigneur!" stammered Rousseau, seeing the blue ribbon.

"Ah, most charming music!" exclaimed the countess; "and completely in harmony with the heart and mind of the author."

Rousseau raised his head, and his eyes met the burning gaze of the countess.

"Madame!" said he, ill-humoredly.

"I will play Colin, Madame!" cried the Comte d'Artois; "and I entreat that you, Madame la Comtesse, will play Colette!"

"With all my heart, Monseigneur; but I should never dare — I, who am not an artist — to profane the music of a master!"

Rousseau would have given his life to look again at her; but the voice, the tone, the flattery, the beauty, had each planted a baited hook in his heart. He tried to escape.

"Monsieur Rousseau," said the prince, blocking up the passage, "I wish you would teach me the part of Colin."

"I dare not ask Monsieur Rousseau to give me his advice respecting Colette!" said the countess, feigning timidity, and thus completing the overthrow of the philosopher. But yet his eyes inquired why.

"Monsieur Rousseau hates me!" said she to the prince, with her enchanting voice.

"You are jesting!" exclaimed the Comte d'Artois. "Who could hate you, Madame?"

"You see it plainly," she replied.

"Monsieur Rousseau is too great a man, and has written too many noble works, to fly from such a charming woman," said the Comte d'Artois.

Rousseau heaved a sigh as if he were ready to give up the ghost, and made his escape through a narrow loophole which the Comte d'Artois had imprudently left between himself and the wall.

But Rousseau was not in luck this evening. He had scarcely proceeded four steps when he met another group, composed of two men, one old, the other young. The young one wore the blue ribbon; the other, who might be about fifty years of age, was dressed in red, and looked austere and pale. These two men overheard the merry laugh of the Comte d'Artois, who exclaimed loudly: "Ah! Monsieur Rousseau! Monsieur Rousseau! I shall say that the countess put you to flight; and in truth no one would believe it."

"Rousseau!" murmured the two men.

"Stop him, brother!" said the prince, still laughing; "stop him, Monsieur de Vauguyon!"

Rousseau now comprehended on what rock his evil star had shipwrecked him. The Comte de Provence and the governor of the royal youths were before him.

The Comte de Provence also barred the way. "Good day, Monsieur," said he, in his dry, pedantic voice.

Rousseau, almost at his wits' end, bowed, muttering to himself: "I shall never get away!"

"Ah! I am delighted to have met you," said the prince, with the air of a schoolmaster who finds a pupil in fault.

"More absurd compliments!" thought Rousseau. "How insipid these great people are!"

"I have read your translation of Tacitus, Monsieur."

"Ah! true," thought Rousseau; "this one is a pedant, a scholar."

"Do you know that it is very difficult to translate Tacitus?"

"Monseigneur, I said so in a short preface."

"Yes, I know, I know; you said in it that you had only a slight knowledge of Latin."

"It is true, Monseigneur."

"Then, Monsieur Rousseau, why translate Tacitus?"

"Monseigneur, it improves one's style."

"Ah! Monsieur Rousseau, it was wrong to translate 'imperatoria brevitate' by 'a grave and concise discourse.'"

Rousseau, uneasy, consulted his memory.

"Yes," said the young prince, with the confidence of an old savant who discovers a fault in Saumaise; "yes, you translated it so. It is in the paragraph where Tacitus relates that Pison harangued his soldiers."

"Well, Monseigneur?"

"Well, Monsieur Rousseau, 'imperatoria brevitate' means, 'with the conciseness of a general,' or of a man accustomed to command. 'With the brevity of command; that is the expression, is it not, Monsieur de la Vauguyon?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the governor.

Rousseau made no reply. The prince added: "That is an evident mistake, Monsieur Rousseau. Oh! I will find you another."

Rousseau turned pale.

"Stay, Monsieur Rousseau, there is one in the paragraph relating to Cecina. It begins thus: 'At in superiore Germania.' You know he is describing Cecina, and Tacitus says, 'Cito sermone'"

"I remember it perfectly, Monseigneur."

"You translated that, 'speaking well.'"

"Yes, Monseigneur, and I thought —"

"'Cito sermone' means 'speaking quickly,' — that is to say, 'easily.'"

"I said 'speaking well.'"

"Then it should have been 'decoro,' or 'ornato,' or 'eleganti sermone;' 'cito' is a picturesque epithet, Monsieur Rousseau. So, in portraying the change in Otho's conduct, Tacitus says: 'Delata voluptate, dissimulata luxuria, cunctaque ad imperii decorem composita.'"

"I have translated that: 'Dismissing luxury and effeminacy to other times, he surprised the world by industriously applying himself to re-establish the glory of the empire.'"

"Wrong, Monsieur Rousseau, wrong! In the first place, you have run the three little phrases into one, which obliges you to translate 'dissimulata luxuria' badly. Then you made a blunder in the last portion of the phrase. Tacitus did not mean that the Emperor Otho applied himself to re-establishing the glory of the empire; he meant to say that, no longer gratifying his passions, and dissimulating his luxurious habits, Otho accommodated all, made all turn, — all, you understand, Monsieur Rousseau; that is to say, even his passions and his vices, — to the glory of the empire. That is the sense, — it is rather complex; yours, however, is too restricted, is it not, Monsieur de la Vauguyon?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

Rousseau perspired and panted under this pitiless infliction. The prince allowed him a moment's breathing-time, and then continued: "You are much more in your element in philosophy, Monsieur."

Rousseau bowed.

"But your 'Émile' is a dangerous book."

"Dangerous, Monseigneur?"

"Yes, from the quantity of false ideas it will put into the humbler citizens' heads!"

"Monseigneur, as soon as a man is a father, he can enter into the spirit of my book, whether he be the first or the last in the kingdom. To be a father — is — is —"

"Tell me, Monsieur Rousseau," asked the satirical prince, suddenly, "your 'Confessions' is a very amusing book. How many children have you had?"

Rousseau turned pale, staggered, and raised an angry and stupefied glance to his young tormentor's face, the expression of which only increased the malicious humor of the Comte de Provence. It was only malice, for without waiting for a reply the prince moved away arm-in-arm with his preceptor, continuing his commentaries on the works of the man whom he had so cruelly crushed.

Rousseau, left alone, was gradually recovering from his stupefaction, when he heard the first bars of his overture executed by the orchestra. He proceeded in that direction with a faltering step, and when he had reached his seat, he said to himself: "Fool! coward! stupid ass that I am! Now only do I find the answer I should have made the cruel little pedant. 'Monseigneur,' I should have said, 'it is not charitable in a young person to torment a poor old man.'"

He had just reached this point, quite content with his phrase, when the dauphiness and Monsieur de Coigny began their duet. The preoccupation of the philosopher was disturbed by the suffering of the musician: the ear was to be tortured after the heart.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REHEARSAL.

THE rehearsal once fairly commenced, and the general attention drawn to the stage, Rousseau was no longer remarked. He began to look around him. He heard noblemen who sang completely out of tune in their shepherd's garb, and saw ladies arrayed in their court-dresses coquetting like shepherdesses.

The dauphiness sang correctly, but she was a bad actress; her voice, moreover, was so weak that she could scarcely be heard. The king, not to intimidate any one, had retired to an obscure box, where he chatted with the ladies. The dauphin prompted the words of the opera, which went off royally badly.

Rousseau determined not to listen, but he felt it very difficult to avoid hearing. He had one consolation, however, for he had just perceived a charming face among the illustrious figurantes, and the village maiden who was the possessor of this charming face had incomparably the finest voice in the entire company.

Rousseau's attention became at once completely riveted, and from his position behind his desk he gazed with his whole soul at the charming figurante, and listened with all his ears to drink in the enchanting melody of her voice.

When the dauphiness saw the author so attentive, she was convinced by his smile and his sentimental air that he was pleased with the execution of his work; and eager

for a compliment, — for she was a woman, — she leaned forward to the desk, saying: "Is our performance very bad, Monsieur Rousseau?"

But Rousseau, with lips apart and absent air, did not reply.

"Oh! we have made some blunders," said the dauphiness, "and Monsieur Rousseau dares not tell us! I entreat you, Monsieur Rousseau!"

Rousseau's gaze followed the beautiful personage, who on her side did not perceive the attention which she excited.

"Ah!" said the dauphiness, observing the direction of our philosopher's eyes, "it is Mademoiselle Taverney who has been in fault!"

Andrée blushed; she saw all eyes directed toward her.

"No, no!" exclaimed Rousseau; "it was not Mademoiselle, for Mademoiselle sings like an angel!"

Madame Dubarry darted at the philosopher a look keener than a javelin. The Baron de Taverney, on the contrary, felt his heart bound with joy, and greeted Rousseau with a most enchanting smile.

"Do you think that young girl sings well?" said Madame Dubarry to the king, who was evidently struck by Rousseau's words.

"In a chorus I cannot hear distinctly," said Louis XV.; "only a musician can properly distinguish."

Meanwhile Rousseau was busy in the orchestra directing the chorus: —

> "Colin returns to his shepherdess;
> Hail we all a return so gay."

As he turned to resume his seat, he saw Monsieur de Jussieu bowing to him graciously. It was no slight

pleasure for the Genevese to be seen thus giving laws to the court by a courtier who had wounded him a little by his superiority. He returned his bow most ceremoniously, and continued to gaze at Andrée, who looked even more lovely for the praises she had received.

As the rehearsal proceeded, Madame Dubarry became furious; twice had she surprised Louis XV.'s attention wandering, distracted by the spectacle before him from the sweet speeches she whispered. To her jealous observation Andrée was the chief feature of the spectacle.

The dauphiness, however, received many compliments, and was in gay spirits. Monsieur de Richelieu fluttered around her with the agility of a young man, and succeeded in forming, at the extremity of the stage, a circle of laughers, of which the dauphiness was the centre, and which rendered the Dubarry party extremely uneasy. "It appears," said he aloud, "that Mademoiselle de Taverney has a sweet voice."

"Charming!" said the dauphiness; "and had I not been too selfish, I should have allowed her to play Colette; but as it is for my amusement that I undertook the character, I will give it up to no one."

"Oh! Mademoiselle de Taverney would not sing it better than your Royal Highness," said Richelieu, "and —"

"Mademoiselle is an excellent musician," said Rousseau, with enthusiasm.

"Excellent!" responded the dauphiness; "and, to confess the truth, it is she who teaches me my part, — besides, she dances enchantingly, and I dance very badly."

The effect of this conversation upon the king, upon Madame Dubarry, and the whole crowd of curious newsmongers and envious intriguers, may be imagined. All

either tasted the pleasure of inflicting a wound, or received the blow with shame and grief. There were no indifferent spectators, except perhaps Andrée herself.

The dauphiness, incited by Richelieu, finally made Andrée sing the air, —

"I have lost my love ;
Colin leaves me."

The king's head was seen to mark the time with such evident tokens of pleasure that Madame Dubarry's rouge fell off in little flakes, as paintings are scaled by moisture.

Richelieu, more malicious than a woman, enjoyed his revenge. He had drawn near the elder Taverney, and the two old men formed a tableau which might have been taken for Hypocrisy and Corruption sealing a compact of union. Their joy increased the more as Madame Dubarry's features grew by degrees darker and darker. She added the finishing stroke to it by rising angrily, which was contrary to all etiquette, as the king was still seated.

The courtiers, like ants, felt the storm approach, and hastened to seek shelter with the strongest. The dauphiness was more closely surrounded by her own friends, Madame Dubarry was more courted by hers.

By degrees the interest of the rehearsal was diverted from its natural course into quite a different direction. Colin and Colette were no more thought of, and many spectators thought that it would soon be Madame Dubarry's turn to sing, —

"I have lost my love ;
Colin leaves me."

"Do you mark," whispered Richelieu to Taverney, "your daughter's immense success?" and he drew him into the corridor, pushing open a glass-door, and causing a

looker-on, who had been clinging to the framework in order to see into the hall, to fall backward.

"Confound the fellow!" growled Richelieu, dusting his sleeve, which the door had brushed against on its rebound; and he seemed still more angry when he saw that the looker-on was dressed like a workman of the chateau.

It was, in fact, a workman, with a basket of flowers under his arm, who had succeeded in climbing up behind the glass, from which position he had looked into the hall and witnessed the entire spectacle. He was pushed back into the corridor, and almost overturned; he himself escaped falling, but his basket was upset.

"Ah! I know the rascal," said Taverney, angrily.

"Who is it?" asked the duke.

"What are you doing here, scoundrel?" said Taverney.

Gilbert — the reader has doubtless already recognized him — replied haughtily, "You see, — I am looking."

"Instead of being at your work," said Richelieu.

"My work is done," said Gilbert, humbly addressing the duke, without deigning to look at Taverney.

"Am I fated to meet this lazy rascal everywhere?" said Taverney.

"Gently, Monsieur," interrupted a voice; "gently. My little Gilbert is a good workman and an industrious botanist."

Taverney turned, and saw Monsieur de Jussieu, who was patting Gilbert on the head. The baron reddened with anger and moved off.

"Valets here!" muttered he.

"Hush!" said Richelieu, "there is Nicole! Look, — up there, in the corner by that door. The little witch! she is not making bad use of her eyes either."

The marshal was correct. Partially concealed behind a score of the domestics of Trianon, Nicole raised her charm-

ing head above all the others, and her eyes, dilated with surprise and admiration, seemed to magnify the scene at which she gazed. Gilbert perceived her, and turned another way.

"Come, come!" said the duke to Taverney; "I think the king wishes to speak to you. He is looking this way;" and the two friends disappeared in the direction of the royal box.

Madame Dubarry was standing behind the king and interchanging signs with Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was also standing, and who did not lose one of his uncle's movements.

Rousseau, now left alone, admired Andrée; he was endeavoring, if we may use the expression, to fall in love with her.

The illustrious actors proceeded to disrobe in their boxes, which Gilbert had decorated with fresh flowers.

Taverney, left alone in the passage by Monsieur de Richelieu, who had gone to rejoin the king, felt his heart alternately chilled and elated. At last the duke returned, and placed his finger upon his lips. Taverney turned pale with joy, and advanced to meet his friend, who drew him beneath the royal box. There they overheard the following conversation, which was quite inaudible to the rest of the company. Madame Dubarry was saying to the king: "May I expect your Majesty to supper this evening?"

And the king replied: "I feel fatigued, Countess; excuse me."

At the same moment the dauphin entered, almost treading on Madame Dubarry's toes, without seeming to see her.

"Sire," said he, "will your Majesty do us the honor of taking supper with us at Trianon?"

"No, my son; I was just saying to the countess that I

feel fatigued. Our young people have made me giddy; I shall sup alone."

The dauphin bowed and retired. Madame Dubarry made a profound reverence, and, trembling with rage, left the box. When she had gone, the king made a sign to the Duc de Richelieu.

"Duke," said he, "I wish to speak to you about an affair which concerns you."

"Sire — "

"I have not been pleased — I wish you to explain to me — Stay, I am alone; you shall take supper with me;" and the king looked at Taverney. "You know this gentleman, I think, Duke?"

"Monsieur de Taverney? Yes, Sire."

"Ah! the father of the charming singer?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Listen, Duke!"

The king stooped to whisper in Richelieu's ear. Taverney clenched his hands till the nails entered the flesh, to avoid showing any emotion. Immediately afterward Richelieu brushed past Taverney, and said: "Follow me, without seeming to do so."

"Whither?" asked Taverney, in the same tone.

"No matter; follow me."

The duke moved away. Taverney followed him at a little distance to the king's apartment. The duke entered; Taverney waited in the ante-room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASKET.

Monsieur de Taverney had not to wait long. Richelieu, having asked the king's valet for something his Majesty had left upon his dressing-table, soon returned, carrying a parcel, the nature of which the baron could not distinguish, on account of the covering of silk which enveloped it. But the marshal soon relieved his friend from all anxiety. Drawing him into a corner of the gallery, "Baron," said he, as soon as he saw that they were alone, "you have at times seemed to doubt my friendship for you?"

"Never since our reconciliation," replied Taverney.

"At least, you were in doubt concerning your fortune and that of your children?"

"Oh! as to that,—yes."

"Well, you were wrong. Your children's fortune and your own is made with a rapidity which should make you giddy."

"Bah!" said Taverney, who suspected part of the truth, but who, as he was not quite certain, took care to guard against mistakes; "how is the fortune of my children so quickly made?"

"Monsieur Philippe is already a captain, with a company paid for by the king."

"It is true; I owe that to you."

"By no means. Now we shall have Mademoiselle de Taverney a marchioness, perhaps."

"Come, come!" exclaimed Taverney. "What, — my daughter!"

"Listen, Taverney! the king has great taste; and beauty, grace, and virtue, when accompanied by talent, delight his Majesty. Now, Mademoiselle de Taverney unites all these qualities in a very high degree. The king is therefore delighted with Mademoiselle de Taverney."

"Duke," replied Taverney, assuming an air of dignity at which the marshal could scarcely repress a smile, — "Duke, what do you mean by 'delighted'?"

Richelieu did not like pretension, and replied, dryly: "Baron, I am not a great linguist; I am not even well versed in orthography. I have always thought that 'delighted' signified 'pleased beyond measure.' If you are grieved beyond measure to see the king pleased with the beauty, the talent, the merit of your children, you have only to say so, — I will return to his Majesty;" and Richelieu turned on his heel with a movement quite juvenile.

"You misunderstand me, Duke!" exclaimed the baron, stopping him. "Confound it, how hasty you are!"

"Why did you say that you were not satisfied?"

"I did not say so."

"You asked for explanations of the king's pleasure; you are foolish!"

"But, Duke, I did not breathe a syllable of that. For my own part, I most certainly am satisfied."

"Ah, you! Well, who will be dissatisfied, — your daughter?"

"Eh! eh!"

"My dear fellow, you have brought up your daughter like a savage, as you are."

"My dear friend, the young lady educated herself; you

may easily imagine that I could not possibly trouble myself with any such matter. I had enough to do to support life in my den at Taverney. Virtue in her has sprung up spontaneously."

"And yet people say that country folks know how to pull up weeds! In short, your daughter is a prude."

"You mistake; she is a dove."

Richelieu made a grimace. "Well," said he, "the poor child has only to look out for a good husband, for opportunities of making a fortune will come to her rarely with this defect."

Taverney looked uneasily at the duke.

"Fortunately for her," continued Richelieu, "the king is so desperately in love with the Dubarry that he will never think seriously of another."

Taverney's alarm was changed to anguish.

"Therefore," continued Richelieu, "you and your daughter may make your minds easy. I will state the unavoidable obstacles to his Majesty, and the king will never bestow another thought on the matter."

"But obstacles to what? Good heavens!" exclaimed Taverney, turning pale, and shaking his friend's arm.

"To his making a little present to Mademoiselle Andrée, my dear Baron."

"A little present! What is it?" asked the baron, full of hope and avarice.

"Oh, a mere trifle!" said Richelieu, carelessly; and he took a casket from its silken covering.

"A casket?"

"A trifle, — a necklace worth a few million francs, which his Majesty, flattered at hearing her sing his favorite air, wished to present to the fair singer. It is quite in order; but since your daughter is easily frightened we will drop the subject."

"Duke, you must not think of it, — that would be to offend the king."

"Of course it would; but is it not the attribute of virtue always to offend some person or some thing?"

"But, Duke, consider, — the child is not so unreasonable."

"That is to say, it is you, and not your child, who speaks."

"Oh, I know so well what she will do and say!"

"The Chinese are a very fortunate people," said Richelieu.

"Why?" asked Taverney, astonished.

"Because they have so many rivers and canals in the country."

"Duke, you turn the conversation. Do not drive me to despair; speak to me."

"I am speaking to you, Baron, and am not changing the conversation at all."

"Then why do you speak of China? What have its rivers to do with my daughter?"

"A great deal. The Chinese, I mean, have the happiness of being able to drown their daughters when they are too virtuous, and no one can forbid it."

"Come, Duke, you must be just! Suppose you had a daughter yourself?"

"*Pardieu!* I have one; and if any one were to tell me that she is too virtuous, it would be very ill-natured of him."

"In short, you would like her better otherwise, would you not?"

"Oh! for my part, I don't meddle with my children after they are eight years old."

"Listen to me, at least! If the king were to commission me to offer a necklace to your daughter, and if your daughter were to complain to you?"

"Oh, my friend, there is no comparison! I have always lived at court, — you have lived like a North American Indian; there is no similarity. What you call virtue, I think folly. Remember, for the future, that nothing is more ill-bred than to say, 'What would you do in this or that case?' And besides, your comparisons are erroneous, my friend. It is not true that I am about to present a necklace to your daughter."

"You said so."

"I said nothing of the sort. I said that the king had directed me to bring him a casket for Mademoiselle de Taverney, whose voice had pleased him; but I did not say that his Majesty had charged me to give it to her."

"Then, in truth," said the baron, in despair, "I know not what to think. I do not understand a single word; you speak in enigmas. Why give this necklace, if it is not to be given? Why do you take charge of it, if not to deliver it?"

Richelieu uttered an exclamation as if he had seen a spider. "Ah!" said he; "pouah! — pouah! the Huron — the ugly animal!"

"Who?"

"You, my good friend, — you, my trusty comrade; you seem as if you had fallen from the clouds, Baron!"

"I am at my wits' end."

"No, you never had any. When a king makes a lady a present, and when he charges Monsieur de Richelieu with the commission, the present is noble, and the commission well executed, — remember that. I do not deliver caskets, my dear fellow, — that was Monsieur Lebel's office. Did you know Monsieur Lebel?"

"What is your office, then?"

"My friend," said Richelieu, tapping Taverney on the shoulder, and accompanying this amicable action by a

sardonic smile, "when I have to do with such paragons of virtue as Mademoiselle Andrée, I am the most moral man in the world. When I approach a dove, as you call your daughter, I do not display the talons of the hawk. When I am deputed to wait on a young lady, I speak to her father. I speak to you, therefore, Taverney, and give you the casket to present to your daughter. Well! are you willing?" — and he offered the casket. "Or do you decline?" — and he drew it back.

"Oh! say, then, all that at once," exclaimed the baron; "say that I am commissioned by his Majesty to deliver the present! If so, it assumes quite a correct and paternal character; it is, so to speak, purified —"

"Purified! Why, you must have suspected his Majesty of evil intentions!" said Richelieu, seriously. "Now, you cannot have dared to do that?"

"God forbid! But the world, — that is to say, my daughter —"

Richelieu shrugged his shoulders. "Will you take it? — yes, or no?" he asked.

Taverney quickly held out his hand. "You are certain it is moral?" said he to the duke, with a smile, the counterpart of that which the duke had just addressed to him.

"Do you not think it pure morality, Baron," said the marshal, "to make the father, who, as you have just said, purifies everything, an intermediate party between the king's delight and your daughter's charms? Let Monsieur Jean Jacques Rousseau, of Geneva, who was hovering about here just now, be the judge; he would say that Joseph was impure in comparison with me."

Richelieu pronounced these few words with a calmness, an abrupt haughtiness, a precision, which silenced Taverney's objections, and assisted to make him believe that

he ought to be convinced. He seized his illustrious friend's hand, therefore, and pressing it, "Thanks to your delicacy," said he, "my daughter can accept this present."

"The source and origin of the good fortune to which I alluded at the commencement of our tiresome discussion on virtue."

"Thanks, dear Duke; most hearty thanks!"

"One word more. Conceal this favor carefully from the Dubarrys. It might make Madame Dubarry leave the king and take flight."

"And the king would be displeased?"

"I don't know; but the countess would not thank us. As for me, I should be lost! Be discreet, therefore."

"Do not fear. But present my most humble thanks to the king."

"And your daughter's — I shall not fail. But you have not yet reached the limits of the favor bestowed upon you. It is you who are to thank the king, my dear fellow; his Majesty invites you to take supper with him this evening."

"Me?"

"You, Taverney. We shall be a select party, — his Majesty, you, and myself. We will talk of your daughter's virtue. Adieu, Taverney; I see Dubarry with Monsieur d'Aiguillon. We must not be seen together;" and, agile as a page, he disappeared at the farther end of the gallery, leaving Taverney gazing at his casket like a Saxon child who awakens and finds the Christmas gifts which have been placed in his hands while he slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

KING LOUIS XV.'S PRIVATE SUPPER.

THE marshal found the king in the little salon whither several of the courtiers had followed him, preferring rather to lose their supper than to allow the wandering glance of their sovereign to fall on any others than themselves. But Louis XV. seemed to have something else to do this evening than to look at these gentlemen. He dismissed every one, saying that he did not intend to sup, or that, if he did, it would be alone. All the guests having thus received their dismissal, and fearing to displease the dauphin if they were not present at the fête which he was to give at the close of the rehearsal, instantly flew off like a cloud of parasite pigeons, and winged their way to him whom they were permitted to see, ready to assert that for him they had deserted his Majesty's drawing-room.

Louis XV., whom they left so rapidly, was far from bestowing a thought on them. At another time the meanness of all this swarm of courtiers would have excited a smile; but on this occasion it awoke no sentiment in the monarch's breast, — a monarch so sarcastic that he spared neither bodily nor mental defect in his best friends, if we may suppose that Louis XV. ever had a friend.

No; at that moment Louis XV. concentrated his entire attention on a carriage which was drawn up opposite the door of the offices of Trianon, the coachman seeming to wait only for the step which should announce the owner's

presence in the gilded vehicle to urge on his horses. The carriage was Madame Dubarry's, and was lighted by torches. Zamore, seated beside the coachman, was swinging his legs backward and forward like a child at play.

At last Madame Dubarry, who had no doubt waited in the corridors in the hope of receiving some message from the king, appeared, supported on Monsieur d'Aiguillon's arm. Her anger, or at least her disappointment, was apparent in the rapidity of her gait. She affected too much resolution not to have lost her presence of mind.

After Madame Dubarry followed Jean, looking gloomy in the extreme, and absently crushing his hat beneath his arm. He had not been present at the representation, — the dauphin having forgotten to invite him; but he had stolen into the ante-room somewhat after the fashion of a lackey, and stood pensive as Hippolytus, with his shirt-frill falling over his vest embroidered with silver and red flowers, and not even looking at his tattered ruffles, which seemed in harmony with his sad thoughts. Jean had seen his sister look pale and alarmed, and had concluded from this that the danger was great. Jean was brave in diplomacy only when opposed to flesh and blood, never when opposed to phantoms.

Concealed behind the window-curtain, the king saw this funereal procession defile before him and bury itself in the countess's carriage. Then, when the door was closed and the footman had mounted behind the carriage, the coachman shook the reins, and the horses started forward at a gallop.

"Oh," said the king, "without making an attempt to see me, to speak to me. The countess is furious!" And he repeated aloud, "Yes, the countess is furious!"

Richelieu, who had just glided into the room like an expected visitor, caught these last words. "Furious, Sire!"

said he; "and for what? Because your Majesty is amused for a moment? Oh, that is not amiable of the countess!"

"Duke," replied Louis XV., "I am not amused; on the contrary, I am wearied, and wish for repose. Music enervates me. If I had listened to the countess, I should have supped at Luciennes; I should have eaten, and, above all, I should have drunk. The countess's wines are too strong; I do not know from what vineyards they come, but they overpower me. Upon my word, I prefer to take my ease here!"

"And your Majesty is perfectly in the right!" said the duke.

"Besides, the countess will find amusement elsewhere. Am I such an amiable companion? She may say so as much as she likes, but I do not believe her."

"Ah, this time your Majesty is in the wrong!" exclaimed the marshal.

"No, Duke; no, in truth. I count my years, and I reflect."

"Sire, the countess is well aware that she could not possibly have better company, and it is that which makes her furious."

"In truth, Duke, I do not know how you manage. You still lead the women as if you were only twenty years old. At that age it is for a man to choose; but at mine, Duke —"

"Well, Sire?"

"It is for the woman to make her calculations."

The marshal burst into a laugh. "Well, Sire," said he, "that is only an additional reason; "if your Majesty thinks the countess is amused, let us console ourselves."

"I do not say she is amused, Duke; I only say that she will in the end be driven to seek amusement."

"Ah! Sire, I dare not assert that such things have never happened."

The king rose, much agitated. "Who waits outside?" he inquired.

"All your suite, Sire."

The king reflected for a moment.

"But have you any one there?"

"I have Rafté."

"Very good."

"What shall he do, Sire?"

"He must find out if the countess really returned to Luciennes."

"The countess is already gone, I think, Sire."

"Yes, ostensibly."

"But whither does your Majesty think she is gone?"

"Who can tell? Jealousy makes her frantic, Duke."

"Sire, is it not rather your Majesty —"

"How? What?"

"Whom jealousy —"

"Duke!"

"In truth, it would be very humiliating for us all, Sire."

"I jealous?" said Louis, with a forced laugh; "are you speaking seriously, Duke?"

Richelieu did not in truth believe it. It must even be confessed that he was very near the truth in thinking that, on the contrary, the king only wished to know if Madame Dubarry was really at Luciennes, in order to be sure that she would not return to Trianon. "Then, Sire," said he, aloud, "it is understood that I am to send Rafté on a voyage of discovery?"

"Send him, Duke."

"In the mean time, what will your Majesty do before supper?"

"Nothing; we shall sup instantly. Have you spoken to the person in question?"

"Yes, he is in your Majesty's antechamber."

"What did he say?"

"He expressed his deep thanks."

"And the daughter?"

"She has not been spoken to yet."

"Duke, Madame Dubarry is jealous, and might readily return."

"Ah, Sire, that would be in very bad taste! I think the countess would be incapable of committing such an enormity."

"Duke, she is capable of anything in such moods, especially when hatred is combined with jealousy. She execrates you; I don't know if you were aware of that."

Richelieu bowed. "I know she does me that honor, Sire."

"She execrates Monsieur de Taverney also."

"If your Majesty would be good enough to reckon, I am sure there is a third person whom she hates even more than me, — even more than the baron."

"Whom?"

"Mademoiselle Andrée."

"Ah!" said the king; "I think that is natural enough."

"Then — "

"Yes, but that does not prevent its being necessary to watch that Madame Dubarry does not cause some scandal this evening."

"On the contrary, it proves the necessity of such a measure."

"Here is the butler. Hush! give your orders to Rafté, and join me in the dining-room with — you know whom!"

Louis rose, and passed into the dining-room, while

Richelieu made his exit by the opposite door. Five minutes afterward he rejoined the king, accompanied by the baron.

The king in the most gracious manner bade Taverney good-evening. The baron was a man of talent, and replied in that peculiar manner which betokens a person accustomed to good society, and which puts kings and princes instantly at their ease. They sat down to table. Louis XV. was a bad king, but a delightful companion; when he pleased, his conversation was full of attraction for boon-companions, talkers, and voluptuaries. The king, in short, had studied life carefully in its most agreeable aspects. He ate heartily, made his guests drink, and turned the conversation on music.

Richelieu caught the ball at the rebound. "Sire," said he, "if music makes men agree, as our ballet-master says, and as your Majesty seems to think, will you say as much of women?"

"Oh, Duke!" replied the king, "let us not speak of women. From the Trojan war to the present time, women have always exercised an influence contrary to that of music. You, especially, have too many quarrels to compound with them, to wish to see that subject brought forward. Among others, there is one, and that not the least dangerous, with whom you are at daggers drawn."

"The countess, Sire? Is that my fault?"

"Of course it is."

"Ah, indeed! Your Majesty, I trust, will explain."

"In two words, and with the greatest pleasure," said the king, slyly.

"I listen, Sire."

"What! she offers you the portfolio of I don't know which department, and you refuse, because, you say, she is not very popular?"

"I?" exclaimed Richelieu, a good deal embarrassed by the turn the conversation was taking.

"Certainly! the report is quite public," said the king, with that feigned good-nature which was peculiar to him. "I forget now who told it to me, — probably the gazette."

"Well, Sire!" said Richelieu, taking advantage of the freedom which the unusual gayety of the august host afforded his guests, "I must confess that on this occasion rumors, and even the gazettes, have reported something not quite so absurd as usual."

"What!" exclaimed Louis XV., "then you have really refused a portfolio, my dear Duke?"

Richelieu, it may easily be imagined, was in an awkward position. The king well knew that he had refused nothing; but it was necessary that Taverney should continue to believe what Richelieu had told him. The duke had therefore to frame his reply so as to avoid furnishing matter for amusement to the king, without at the same time incurring the reproach of falsehood, which was already hovering upon the baron's lips and twinkling in his smile.

"Sire," said Richelieu, "pray let us not speak of effects, but of the cause. Whether I have or have not refused a portfolio, is a State secret which your Majesty is not bound to divulge over the bottle; but the cause for which I should have refused the portfolio, had it been offered to me, is the important point."

"Oh, oh, Duke!" said the monarch, laughing; "and this cause is not a State secret?"

"No, Sire, and especially not for your Majesty, who is at this moment — I beg pardon of the divinity — the most amiable earthly Amphytrion in the universe for my friend the Baron de Taverney and myself. I have no secrets, therefore, from my king. I give my whole soul up to

him, for I do not wish it to be said that the King of France has not one servant who would tell him the entire truth."

"Let us hear the truth, then, Duke," said the king, while Taverney, fearing that Richelieu might go too far, pinched his lips and composed his countenance scrupulously after the king's.

"Sire, in your dominions there are two powers which a minister must obey, — the first is your will; the second, that of your Majesty's most intimate friends. The first power is irresistible, — none dare to rebel against it; the second is yet more sacred, for it imposes duties of the heart on whosoever serves you. It is termed your confidence. To obey it, a minister must have the most devoted regard for the favorite of the king."

Louis XV. laughed. "Duke," said he, "that is a very good maxim, and one I am delighted to hear from your lips; but I dare you to proclaim it aloud by sound of trumpet upon the Pont Neuf."

"Oh, I know, Sire," said Richelieu, "that the philosophers would be up in arms; but I do not think that their objurgations would matter much to your Majesty or to me. The chief point is that the two dominant wills in the kingdom may be satisfied. Well! the will of a certain person, — I will confess it openly to your Majesty, even should my disgrace, that is, my death, be the consequence, — Madame Dubarry's will I could not obey."

Louis was silent.

"It occurred to me the other day," continued Richelieu, "to look around in your Majesty's court; and in truth I saw so many noble girls, so many women of dazzling beauty, that had I been king of France, I should have found it almost impossible to choose."

Louis turned to Taverney, who, seeing things take such

a favorable turn for him, sat trembling with hope and fear, aiding the marshal's eloquence with eyes and breath, as if he would waft forward the vessel loaded with his fortunes to a safe harbor.

"Come, Baron, what is your opinion?" said the king.

"Sire," replied Taverney, with swelling heart, "the duke, as it seems to me, has been saying excellent things to your Majesty."

"Then you are of his opinion in what he says of lovely girls?"

"In fact, Sire, I think there are indeed very lovely young girls at the French court."

"Then you are of his opinion?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And, like him, you advise me to choose among the beauties of the court?"

"I would venture to confess that I am of the marshal's opinion, if I dared to believe that it was also your Majesty's."

There was a short silence, during which the king looked complaisantly at Taverney. "Gentlemen," said he, "no doubt I should follow your advice, if I were only thirty years of age. I should have a very natural predilection for it; but I find myself at present rather too old to be credulous."

"Credulous! pray, Sire, explain the meaning of the word."

"To be credulous, my dear Duke, means to believe. Now, nothing will make me believe certain things."

"What are they?"

"That at my age it is possible to inspire love."

"Ah, Sire!" exclaimed Richelieu, "until this moment I thought your Majesty was the most polite gentleman in

your dominions; but with deep regret I see that I have been mistaken."

"How so?" asked the king, laughing.

"Because, in that case, I must be as old as Methuselah, as I was born in '94. Remember, Sire, I am sixteen years older than your Majesty."

This was an adroit piece of flattery on the duke's part. Louis XV. had always admired this man's age, who had outlived so many younger men in his service; for having this example before him, he might hope to reach the same advanced period.

"Granted," said Louis; "but I hope you no longer have the pretension to be loved for yourself, Duke?"

"If I thought not, Sire, I would instantly quarrel with two ladies who told me so only this very morning."

"Well! Duke," said Louis, "we shall see; Monsieur de Taverney, we shall see. Youth rejuvenates, it is very true."

"Yes, yes, Sire; and we must not forget that a powerful constitution, like your Majesty's, always gains, and never loses."

"Yet I remember," said Louis, "that my predecessor, when he became old, no longer courted women with the same boldness."

"Come, come, Sire!" said Richelieu. "Your Majesty knows my great respect for the late king, who twice sent me to the Bastille; but that ought not to prevent me from saying that there is a vast difference between the ripe age of Louis XV. and that of Louis XIV. What the devil! your most Christian Majesty, although honoring fully your title of eldest son of the Church, does not carry asceticism so far as to forget your humanity?"

"Faith, no!" said Louis. "I may confess it, since neither my doctor nor confessor is present."

"Well, Sire! the king, your grandfather, frequently astonished Madame de Maintenon, who was even older than he, by his excess of religious zeal and his innumerable penances. I repeat it, Sire, can there be any comparison made between your two Majesties?"

The king this evening was in a good humor. Richelieu's words acted upon him like so many drops of water from the fountain of youth. Richelieu thought the time had come; he touched Taverney's knee with his.

"Sire," said the latter, "will your Majesty deign to accept my thanks for the magnificent present you have made my daughter?"

"You need not thank me for that, Baron," said the king. "Mademoiselle de Taverney pleased me by her modest and ingenuous grace. I wish my daughters had still their households to form; certainly, Mademoiselle Andrée — that is her name, is it not —?"

"Yes, Sire," said Taverney, delighted that the king knew his daughter's Christian name.

"A very pretty name. Certainly Mademoiselle Andrée should have been the first upon the list; but every post in my house is filled up. In the mean time, Baron, you may reckon upon my protection for your daughter. I think I have heard she has not a rich dowry?"

"Alas! no, Sire."

"Well, I will make her marriage my especial care."

Taverney bowed to the ground.

"Then your Majesty must be good enough," said he, "to select a husband; for I confess that, in our confined circumstances, — our almost poverty —"

"Yes, yes; rest easy on that point," said Louis. "But she seems very young; there is no haste."

"The less, Sire, that your protégée has a horror of marriage."

"Ha!" said Louis, rubbing his hands and looking at Richelieu. "Well! at all events, Monsieur de Taverney, command me whenever you are at all embarrassed."

Then, rising, the king beckoned the duke, who approached. "Was the little one satisfied?" he asked.

"With what?"

"With the casket."

"Your Majesty must excuse my speaking low, but the father is listening, and he must not overhear what I have to tell you."

"Bah!"

"No, I assure you, Sire."

"Well, speak!"

"Sire, the little one has indeed a horror of marriage; but of one thing I am certain, — she has not a horror of your Majesty."

Uttering these words in a tone of familiarity which pleased the king from its very frankness, the marshal, with his little, pattering steps, hastened to rejoin Taverney, who, from respect, had moved away to the door of the gallery.

Both retired by the gardens. It was a lovely evening. Two servants walked before them, holding torches in one hand, and with the other pulling aside the branches of the flowering shrubs. The windows of Trianon were blazing with light, and flitting across them could be discerned a crowd of joyous figures, the honored guests of the dauphiness. His Majesty's band gave life and animation to the minuet, for dancing had begun after supper, and was still continued.

Concealed in a dense thicket of lilac and snowball shrubs, Gilbert, kneeling upon the ground, was gazing at the movements of the shadows through the transparent curtains. A thunderbolt cleaving the earth would scarcely

have distracted the attention of the gazer, so much was he entranced by the lovely forms he was following with his eyes through all the mazes of the dance. Nevertheless, when Richelieu and Taverney passed, and brushed against the thicket in which this night-bird was concealed, the sound of their voices, and above all a certain word, made Gilbert raise his head; for this word was an all-important one for him.

The marshal, leaning upon his friend's arm, and bending down to his ear, was saying: "Everything well weighed and considered, Baron, — it is a hard thing to tell you, — but you must at once send your daughter to a convent."

"Why so?" asked the baron.

"Because I would wager," replied the marshal, "that the king is in love with Mademoiselle de Taverney."

At these words Gilbert started, and turned paler than the flaky snow-berries which at his abrupt movement showered down upon his head and shoulders.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRESENTIMENTS.

The next day, as the clock at Trianon was striking twelve, Nicole's voice was heard calling Andrée, who had not yet left her chamber, "Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, here is Monsieur Philippe!"

The exclamation came from the foot of the stairs. Andrée, at once surprised and delighted, drew her muslin robe closely over her neck and shoulders, and hastened to meet the young man, who was in fact dismounting in the court-yard of Trianon, and inquiring of the servants at what time he could see his sister.

Andrée therefore opened the door in person, and found herself face to face with Philippe, whom the officious Nicole had gone to meet in the courtyard, and was accompanying up the stairs. The young girl threw her arms round her brother's neck, and they entered Andrée's apartments together, followed by Nicole.

It was then that Andrée for the first time remarked that Philippe was more serious than usual, that his smile was not free from sadness, that he wore his elegant uniform with the most scrupulous neatness, and that he held a travelling cloak over his arm.

"What is the matter, Philippe?" she asked, with that instinct of tender souls to which a look is a sufficient revelation.

"My sister," said Philippe, "this morning I received an order to join my regiment."

"And you are going?"

"And I am going."

"Oh!" said Andrée; and with this plaintive exclamation all her courage, and almost all her strength, seemed to desert her. Although this departure was a very natural occurrence, and one which she might have foreseen, yet she felt so overpowered by the announcement that she was obliged to lean for support on her brother's arm.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Philippe, astonished, "does this departure afflict you so much, Andrée? You know, in a soldier's life, it is a most commonplace event."

"Yes, yes, it is in truth common," murmured the young girl. "And whither do you go, brother?"

"My garrison is at Rheims. You see, I have not a very long journey to undertake. But it is probable that from there the regiment will return to Strasburg."

"Alas!" said Andrée, "and when do you set out?"

"The order commands me to start immediately."

"You have come to bid me good-by, then?"

"Yes, sister."

"A farewell!"

"Have you anything particular to say to me, Andrée?" asked Philippe, fearing that this extreme dejection might have some other cause than his departure.

Andrée understood that these words were meant to call her attention to Nicole, who, astonished at Andrée's extreme grief, was gazing at this scene with much surprise; for, in fact, the departure of an officer to his garrison was not a catastrophe to cause such a flood of tears.

Andrée, therefore, noticed at the same instant Philippe's feelings and Nicole's surprise. She took up a mantle, threw it over her shoulders, and leading her brother to the staircase, "Come," said she, "as far as the park-gates,

Philippe. I will accompany you through the covered alley. I have indeed many things to tell you, brother."

These words were equivalent to a dismissal for Nicole, who returned to her mistress's chamber, while the latter descended the staircase with Philippe.

Andrée led the way to the passage which still, even at the present day, opens into the garden; but although Philippe's look anxiously questioned her, she remained for a long time silent, leaning upon his arm, and supporting her head upon his shoulder. But at last her heart was too full; her features were overspread with a death-like paleness, a deep sigh escaped her lips, and tears rushed from her eyes.

"My dear sister, my sweet Andrée!" exclaimed Philippe, "in the name of Heaven, what is the matter?"

"My friend, my only friend!" said Andrée, "you depart, you leave me alone in this great world, which I entered but yesterday, and yet you ask me why I weep? Ah! remember, Philippe, I lost my mother at my birth; it is dreadful to acknowledge it, but I have never had a father. All my little griefs, all my little secrets, I could confide to you alone. Who smiled upon me? Who took care of me? Who caressed me? Who rocked me in my cradle? It was you. Who has protected me since I grew up? You. Who taught me that God's creatures were not cast into the world only to suffer? You, Philippe, — you alone. For since the hour of my birth, I have loved no one in the world but you, and no one but you has loved me in return. Oh, Philippe, Philippe!" continued Andrée, sadly, "you turn away your head, and I can read your thoughts. You think I am young, that I am beautiful, and that I am wrong not to trust to the future and to love. And yet you see, alas! Philippe, it is not enough to be young and handsome, for no one thinks of me.

"You will say the dauphiness is kind; and she is so. She is all perfection; at least, she seems so in my eyes, and I look upon her as a divinity. But it is exactly because she holds this exalted station that I can feel only respect for her, and not affection. Yet, Philippe, affection is necessary for my heart, which, if always thrust back on itself, must at last break. My father — I tell you nothing new, Philippe — my father is not only no protector or friend, but I cannot even look at him without feeling terror. Yes, yes, I fear him, Philippe; and still more now that you are leaving me. Why do I fear him? I do not know. Eh, *mon Dieu!* do not the birds of the air and the flocks of the field feel and dread the approaching storm? You will say they are endowed with instinct; but why will you deny the instinct of misfortune to our immortal souls? For some time past everything has prospered with our family, I know it well. You are a captain; I am in the household, and almost in the intimacy, of the dauphiness; my father, it is said, supped last night almost *tête-à-tête* with the king. Well, Philippe, I repeat it, even should you think me mad, all this alarms me more than our peaceful poverty and obscurity at Taverney."

"And yet, dear sister," said Philippe, sadly, "you were alone there also; I was not with you there to console you."

"Yes, but at least I was alone, — alone with the memories of childhood. It seemed to me as if the house where my mother lived and breathed her last would bestow upon me, if I may so speak, a protecting care. All there was peaceful, gentle, friendly. I could see you depart with calmness, and welcome you back with joy. But whether you departed or returned, my heart was not all with you; it was attached also to that dear house, to my gardens, to my flowers, to the whole scene of which formerly you

were but a part. Now you are all to me, Philippe, and when you leave me I am indeed alone."

"And yet, Andrée, you have now a protection far more powerful than mine."

"True."

"A happy future before you."

"Who can tell?"

"Why do you doubt it?"

"I do not know."

"This is ingratitude toward God, sister."

"Oh! no, thank Heaven, I am not ungrateful to God. Morning and evening I offer up thanks to him; but it seems to me as if, instead of receiving my prayers with favor, every time I bend the knee, a voice from on high says to me, 'Take care, young girl, take care!'"

"But against what are you to guard? Answer me. I will admit that a misfortune threatens you: have you any presentiment of the nature of this misfortune? Do you know how to act so as best to confront it, or how to avoid it?"

"I know nothing, Philippe, except that my life seems to hang by a thread, that nothing will look bright to me from the moment of your departure. In a word, it seems as if during my sleep I had been placed on the declivity of a precipice too steep for me to arrest my progress when roused to a sense of my danger; that I see the abyss, and yet am dragged down; and that, you being far away, and your helping hand no longer ready to support me, I shall be dashed down and crushed in the fall."

"Dear sister! my sweet Andrée!" said Philippe, agitated in spite of himself by the expression of deep and unaffected terror in her voice and manner, "you exaggerate to yourself a tenderness for which I feel deeply grateful. Yes, you will lose your friend, but only for a time. I

shall not be so far distant but that you can send for me if necessity should arise. Besides, remember that except for your chimerical fears, nothing really threatens you."

Andrée placed herself in her brother's way. "Then, Philippe," said she, "how does it happen that you, who are a man, and gifted with so much more strength, are at this moment as sad as I am? Tell me, my brother, how do you explain that?"

"Easily, dear sister," said Philippe, arresting Andrée's steps, for she had again moved forward, on ceasing to speak. "We are brother and sister not only by blood, but in heart and affection; therefore we have lived in an intimate communion of thoughts and feelings, which, especially since our arrival in Paris, has become to me a delightful necessity. I break this chain, my dear sister, or rather it is broken by others, and I feel the blow in my heart. I am therefore sad, but only for the moment, Andrée. I can look beyond our separation; I do not believe in any misfortune, except in that of not seeing you for some months, perhaps for a year. I am resigned, and do not say 'adieu,' but rather, 'au revoir.'"

In spite of these consolatory words, Andrée could reply only by sobs and tears.

"Dear sister," exclaimed Philippe, grieved at this dejection, which seemed so incomprehensible to him, "you have not told me all, — you hide something from me. In Heaven's name, speak!" and he took her in his arms, pressing her to his heart, and gazing earnestly in her eyes.

"I!" said she. "No, no, Philippe, I assure you solemnly. You know that all the most secret recesses of my heart are open before you."

"Well, then, Andrée, for pity's sake, take courage; do not grieve me so."

"You are right," said she, "and I am mad. Listen!

I never had a strong mind, as you, Philippe, know better than any one ; I have always been timid, dreaming, melancholy. But I have no right to make so tenderly beloved a brother a sharer in my fears, above all when he labors to give me courage, and proves to me that I am wrong to be alarmed. You are right, Philippe ; it is true, everything here is conducive to my happiness. Forgive me, Philippe ! You see, I dry my tears, I weep no longer ; I smile, Philippe, — I do not say 'adieu,' but rather, 'au revoir ; '" and the young maiden tenderly embraced her brother, hiding her head on his shoulder, to conceal from his view a tear which still dimmed her eye, and which dropped like a pearl upon the golden epaulette of the young officer.

Philippe gazed upon her with that infinite tenderness which partakes at the same time of a father's and a brother's affection. "Andrée," said he, "I like to see you bear yourself thus bravely. Be of good courage ! I must go, but the courier will bring you a letter every week ; and every week let me receive one from you in return."

"Yes, Philippe," said Andrée ; "yes, it will be my only happiness. But you have informed my father, have you not ? "

"Of what ? "

"Of your departure."

"Dear sister, it was the baron himself who brought me the minister's order this morning. Monsieur de Taverney is not like you, Andrée, and it seems will easily part with me. He appeared pleased at the thought of my departure, and in fact he was right. Here I can never get forward, while there many occasions may present themselves."

"My father is glad to see you go ? " murmured Andrée. "Are you not mistaken, Philippe ? "

"He has you," replied Philippe, eluding the question; "that is a consolation for him, sister."

"Do you think so, Philippe? He never sees me."

"My sister, he bade me tell you that this very day, after my departure, he would come to Trianon. Believe me, he loves you; only it is after his own fashion."

"What is the matter now, Philippe? You seem embarrassed."

"Dear Andrée, I heard the clock strike, — what time is it?"

"A quarter of one."

"Well, dear sister, I seem embarrassed because I ought to have been on the road an hour ago; and here we are at the gate, where my horse is waiting. Therefore — "

Andrée assumed a calm demeanor, and taking her brother's hand, "Therefore," said she, in a voice too firm to be quite natural, "therefore, brother, adieu!"

Philippe gave her one last embrace.

"Au revoir," said he; "remember your promise."

"What promise?"

"One letter a week at least."

"Oh! do you think it necessary to ask it?"

She pronounced these last words with a violent effort. The poor girl's voice was scarcely audible.

Philippe waved his hand to her, and walked quickly toward the gate. Andrée followed his retreating form with her eyes, holding in her breath in the endeavor to repress her sighs. Philippe mounted his horse, shouted a last farewell from the other side of the gate, and was gone.

Andrée remained standing motionless till he was out of sight; then she turned, darted like a wounded fawn among the shady trees, perceived a bench, and had only strength sufficient to reach it, and to sink on it powerless

and almost lifeless. Then, heaving a deep and heartrending sigh, she exclaimed: "Oh, my God! why dost thou leave me thus alone upon earth?"

She buried her face in her hands, while the big tears she did not seek to restrain made their way between her slender fingers. At this instant a slight rustling was heard amid the shrubs behind her. Andrée thought she heard a sigh. She turned, alarmed; a melancholy form stood before her. It was Gilbert.

CHAPTER XV.

GILBERT'S ROMANCE.

As pale, as despairing as Andrée, Gilbert stood downcast before her. At the sight of a man, and of a stranger, — for such he seemed at first sight through the thick veil of tears which obscured her gaze, — Andrée hastily dried her eyes, as if the proud young girl would have blushed to be seen weeping. She controlled her agitation, and restored calmness to her marble features, only an instant before quivering with the shudder of despair. Gilbert was much longer in regaining his calmness, and his features still wore an expression of grief when Mademoiselle de Taverney, looking up, at last recognized him.

"Oh! Monsieur Gilbert again!" said Andrée, with that trifling tone which she affected to assume whenever chance — as she believed — brought this young man into her presence.

Gilbert made no reply; his feelings were still too deeply moved. The grief which had shaken Andrée's frame to the centre had violently agitated his own. It was Andrée, therefore, who again broke the silence, wishing to have the last word with this apparition. "But what is the matter, Monsieur Gilbert," she inquired. "Why do you gaze at me in that woe-begone manner? Something must grieve you. May I ask what it is?"

"Do you wish to know?" asked Gilbert, mournfully, for he felt the irony concealed beneath this appearance of interest.

"Yes."

"Well, what grieves me, Mademoiselle, is to see you suffer," replied Gilbert.

"And who told you that I am suffering, Monsieur?"

"I see it."

"You mistake, Monsieur; I am not suffering," said Andrée, passing her handkerchief over her face.

Gilbert perceived the storm rising, but he resolved to turn it aside by humility. "I entreat your pardon, Mademoiselle," said he, "but I heard your sobs."

"Ah! you were listening; better and better!"

"Mademoiselle, it was by accident," stammered Gilbert, for he knew that he was telling a falsehood.

"Accident! I regret exceedingly, Monsieur Gilbert, that chance should have brought you here. But even so, may I ask in what manner these sobs which you heard me utter grieved you? Tell me that, if you please?"

"I cannot bear to see a woman weep," said Gilbert, in a tone which highly displeased Andrée.

"Am I then a woman in Monsieur Gilbert's eyes?" replied the haughty young girl. "I sue for no one's sympathy, but Monsieur Gilbert's still less than any other's."

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, sadly, "you do wrong to taunt me thus. I saw you sad, and I felt grieved. I heard you say that now Monsieur Philippe was gone, you would be alone in the world. Never, Mademoiselle! for I am beside you; and never did a heart beat more devoted to you. I repeat it, Mademoiselle de Taverney cannot be alone in the world while my head can think, my heart beat, or my arm retains its strength."

While he spoke these words Gilbert was indeed an example of manly strength and beauty, although he pronounced them with all the humility which the most sincere respect commanded. But it was fated that every-

thing which the young man did should displease Andrée, should offend her, and urge her to offensive retorts, — as if his very respect were an insult, and his prayers a provocation. At first she attempted to rise, that she might second her harsh words with as harsh gestures; but a nervous shudder retained her on her seat. Besides, she reflected that if she were standing, she could be seen from a distance, and seen talking to Gilbert. She therefore remained seated; for she was determined, once for all, to crush the importunate insect before her under foot. She therefore replied, —

"I thought I had already informed you, Monsieur Gilbert, that you are highly displeasing to me, that your voice annoys me, that your philosophical speeches disgust me. Then why, when you know this, do you still persist in addressing me?"

"Mademoiselle," replied Gilbert, pale, but self-possessed, "an honest-hearted woman is never disgusted by sympathy. An honest man is the equal of every human being; and I, whom you maltreat so cruelly, deserve, more than any other, perhaps, the sympathy which I regret to perceive you do not feel for me."

At this word "sympathy," thus twice repeated, Andrée opened her large eyes to their utmost extent, and fixed them impertinently upon Gilbert. "Sympathy!" said she; "sympathy between you and me, Monsieur Gilbert! In truth I was deceived in my opinion of you. I took you for insolent, and I find you are even less than that, — you are only an idiot."

"I am neither insolent nor an idiot," said Gilbert, with an apparent calm, which it must have caused his proud disposition much to assume. "No, Mademoiselle; nature has made me your equal, and chance has made you my debtor."

"Chance again!" said Andrée, sarcastically.

"Perhaps I should have said Providence. I never intended to speak to you of this, but your insults refresh my memory."

"I your debtor, Monsieur? Your debtor, I think you said? Explain yourself, Monsieur Gilbert."

"I should be ashamed to find you ungrateful, Mademoiselle. God, who has made you so beautiful, has given you, to compensate for your beauty, sufficient defects without that."

This time Andrée rose.

"Stay! pardon me!" said Gilbert; "at times you irritate me too much, and then I forget for a moment the interest with which you inspire me."

Andrée burst into a fit of laughter so prolonged that it was calculated to rouse Gilbert's anger to the utmost; but to her great surprise Gilbert did not take fire. He folded his arms on his breast, retained the same hostile and determined expression in his fiery glance, and patiently awaited the end of this insulting laugh.

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, coldly, "will you condescend to answer one question? Do you respect your father?"

"You take the liberty of catechising me, it seems, Monsieur Gilbert?" replied the young girl, with sovereign hauteur.

"Yes, you respect your father," continued Gilbert; "and it is not on account of his good qualities or his virtues, but simply because he gave you life. A father, unfortunately, — and you must know it, Mademoiselle, — is respected in only one relation; but still it gives him a claim. Even more; for this sole benefit,"— and Gilbert, in his turn, felt himself animated by an emotion of scornful pity, — "you are bound to love your benefactor.

Well, Mademoiselle, this being established as a principle, why do you insult me? why do you scorn me? why do you hate me, — me, who, it is true, did not give you life, but who saved it to you?"

"You!" exclaimed Andrée; "you saved my life?"

"Ah! you did not even dream of that," said Gilbert, "or rather you have forgotten it. That is very natural; it occurred nearly a year ago. Well, Mademoiselle, I must therefore inform you of it, or recall it to your memory. Yes, I saved your life at the risk of my own."

"At least, Monsieur Gilbert," said Andrée, deadly pale, "you will do me the favor of telling me when and where."

"The day, Mademoiselle, when a hundred thousand persons, crushed one against another, fleeing from the fiery horses, and the sabres which thinned the crowd, left a long train of dead and dying upon the Place Louis XV."

"Ah! the 30th of May?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

Andrée seated herself, and her features again assumed a pitiless smile. "And on that day, you say you risked your life to save mine, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"I have already told you so."

"Then you are the Baron Balsamo; I beg your pardon, I was not aware of it."

"No, I am not the Baron Balsamo," replied Gilbert, with flashing eye and quivering lip; "I am the poor child of the people, — Gilbert, who has the folly, the madness, the misfortune to love you; who, because he loved you like a madman, like a fool, like a sot, followed you into the crowd; who, separated from you for a moment, recognized you by the piercing shriek you uttered when you lost your footing; who, forcing his way to you, shielded you with his arms until twenty thousand arms, pressing against his, broke their strength; who threw himself upon

the stone wall against which you were about to be crushed, to afford you the softer repose of his corpse; and perceiving among the crowd that strange man who seemed to govern his fellow-men, and whose name you have just pronounced, collected all his strength, all his energy, and raised you in his exhausted arms that this man might see you, seize hold of you, and save you! — Gilbert, who in yielding you up to a more fortunate protector than himself, retained nothing but a shred of your dress, which he pressed to his lips! And it was time; for already the blood was rushing to his heart, to his temples, to his brain. The rolling tide of executioners and victims swept over him, and buried him beneath its waves, while you, like an angel of the resurrection, ascended from his abyss toward heaven."

Gilbert in these hurried words had shown himself as he was, — uncultivated, simple, almost sublime, in his resolution as in his love. Notwithstanding her contempt, Andrée could not refrain from gazing at him with astonishment. For a moment he believed that his narrative had been as irresistible as truth — as love. But poor Gilbert did not take into his calculations incredulity, — that insincerity of hatred. Andrée, who hated Gilbert, did not allow herself to be moved by any of the forcible arguments of her despised lover. She did not reply immediately, but looked at Gilbert, while something like a struggle took place in her mind.

The young man, therefore, ill at ease during this freezing silence, felt himself obliged to add, as a sort of peroration: "And now, Mademoiselle, do not detest me as you did formerly; for now it would not only be injustice, but ingratitude, to do so. I said so before, and I now repeat it."

At these words Andrée raised her haughty brow, and in

the most indifferent and cutting tone she asked: "How long, Monsieur Gilbert, did you remain under Monsieur Rousseau's tutelage?"

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, ingenuously, "I think about three months, without reckoning the few days of my illness, which was caused by the accident on the 30th of May."

"You misunderstand me," said she; "I did not ask you whether you had been ill or not, or what accidents you may have received. They add an artistic finish to your story, but otherwise they are of no importance to me. I merely wished to tell you that, having resided only three months with the illustrious author, you have profited well by his lessons, and that the pupil at his first essay composes romances almost worthy of his master."

Gilbert had listened with calmness, believing that Andrée was about to reply seriously to his impassioned narration; but at this stroke of cutting irony he fell from the summit of his buoyant hopes to the dust. "A romance!" murmured he, indignantly; "you treat what I have told you as a romance!"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Andrée, "a romance, — I repeat the word; only you did not force me to read it, — for that I have to thank you. I deeply regret that, unfortunately, I am not able to repay its full value; but I should make the attempt in vain, — the romance is invaluable."

"And this is your reply?" stammered Gilbert, a pang darting through his heart, and his eyes becoming dim from emotion.

"I do not reply at all, Monsieur," said Andrée, pushing him aside, that she might pass before him.

The fact was that Nicole had at that moment made her appearance at the end of the alley, calling her mistress while still a considerable distance off, in order not to in

terrupt this interview too suddenly, ignorant as she was as to who Andrée's companion might be, for she had not recognized Gilbert through the foliage. But as she approached, she saw the young man, recognized him, and stood astounded. She then repented not having made a detour, in order to overhear what Gilbert had to say to Mademoiselle de Taverney. The latter addressed her in a softened voice, as if to mark more strongly to Gilbert the haughtiness with which she had spoken to him.

"Well, child," said she, "what is the matter?"

"The Baron de Taverney and the Duc de Richelieu have come to present their respects to Mademoiselle," replied Nicole.

"Where are they?"

"In Mademoiselle's apartments."

"Come, then;" and Andrée moved away.

Nicole followed, not without throwing, as she passed, a sarcastic glance back at Gilbert, who, livid with agitation, and almost frantic with rage, shook his clenched hand in the direction of his departing enemy, and grinding his teeth, muttered: "Oh, creature without heart, without soul! I saved your life, I concentrated all my love on you, I extinguished every feeling which might offend what I called your purity; for in my madness you were to me a holy virgin, like the Virgin who is in heaven. Now that I have seen you more nearly, I find you are no more than a woman, and I am a man. Oh, one day or another, Andrée de Taverney, I shall avenge myself! I have had you twice in my power, and twice I have respected you. Andrée de Taverney, beware of the third time! Au revoir, Andrée." He rushed from the spot, bounding through the thickest of the shrubs like a young wolf wounded by the hunter, who turns and shows his sharp teeth and his bloodshot eyeballs.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

When she reached the opposite extremity of the alley, Andrée saw her father and the marshal walking up and down before the vestibule waiting for her. The two friends seemed in high spirits, and as they stood with their arms interlaced, presented a better representation of Orestes and Pylades than the court had ever witnessed. As Andrée approached, the two old men seemed still more joyous, and remarked to each other on her radiant beauty, heightened by her walk and by the emotion she had previously undergone.

The marshal saluted Andrée as he would have saluted a declared Madame Pompadour. This distinction did not escape Taverney, who was delighted at it; but it surprised Andrée by its mixture of respect and gallantry, for the cunning courtier could put as many shades of meaning into a bow as Covielle could put French phrases into a single Turkish word. Andrée returned the marshal's salutation, made one equally ceremonious to her father, and then, with fascinating grace, she invited both to follow her to her apartment.

The marshal admired the exquisite neatness, which was the only ornament of the furniture and architecture of this retreat. With a few flowers and a little white muslin, Andrée had made her rather gloomy chamber, not a palace, but a temple.

The duke seated himself upon an armchair covered with green chintz, beneath a Chinese cornucopia, from which

drooped bunches of perfumed acacia and maple, mingled with iris and Bengal roses. Taverney occupied a similar chair; and Andrée sank upon a folding stool, her arm resting on a harpsichord, also ornamented with flowers arranged in a large Dresden vase.

"Mademoiselle," said the marshal, "I come as the bearer, on the part of his Majesty, of the compliments which your charming voice and your musical talents drew from every auditor of yesterday's rehearsal. His Majesty feared to arouse jealousy by praising you too openly at the time, and he therefore charged me to express to you the pleasure you have caused him."

Andrée blushed; and her blush made her so lovely that the marshal proceeded, as if speaking on his own account. "The king has assured me," said he, "that he never saw any one at his court who united to such a high degree the gifts of mind and the charms of personal beauty."

"You forget those of the heart," said Taverney, with effusion; "Andrée is the best of daughters."

The marshal thought for a moment that his old friend was about to weep. Admiring deeply this display of paternal sensibility, he exclaimed: "The heart, alas! My dear friend, you alone can judge of the tenderness of which Mademoiselle's heart is capable. Were I but twenty-five years of age, I would lay my life and my fortune at her feet!"

Andrée did not yet know how to receive lightly a courtier's homage. Richelieu elicited from her only a murmur without significance.

"Mademoiselle," he continued, "the king requests you will accept a slight testimony of his satisfaction; and he has charged the baron, your father, to transmit it to you. What reply shall I make to his Majesty from you?"

"Monsieur," replied Andrée, animated by no feeling but

that respect which is due to a monarch from all his subjects, "assure his Majesty of my deep gratitude; tell him that he honors me too highly by deigning to think of me, and that I am not worthy the attention of so powerful a monarch."

Richelieu seemed in raptures at this reply, which Andrée pronounced with a firm voice, and without hesitation. He took her hand, kissed it respectfully, and devouring her with his eyes, "A royal hand," said he, "a fairy foot, — mind, purity, resolution. Ah, Baron, what a treasure! It is not a daughter whom you have, — it is a queen!"

With these words he retired, leaving Taverney alone with Andrée, his heart swelling with pride and hope.

Whoever had seen this advocate of antiquated theories, this sceptic, this scoffer, inhaling with delight the atmosphere of favor through its most disreputable channel, would have said that God had blinded at the same moment both his intellect and heart. Taverney alone might have replied, with reference to this change, "It is not I who have changed, — it is the times."

He remained, then, seated near Andrée, and could not help feeling somewhat embarrassed; for the young girl, with her air of unconquerable serenity, and her clear, limpid, unfathomable look, seemed as if she would penetrate his most secret thoughts.

"Did not Monsieur de Richelieu, Monsieur, say that his Majesty had intrusted you with a testimony of his satisfaction? May I ask what it is?"

"Ah!" thought Taverney, "she is curious, — so much the better! I could not have expected it. So much the better!"

He drew the casket, which the marshal had given him the evening before, slowly from his pocket, just as a kind papa produces a paper of bonbons or a toy, which the

children have devoured with their eyes before their hands can reach it.

"Here it is," said he.

"Ah, jewels!" said Andrée.

"Are they to your taste?"

It was a set of pearls of great value. Twelve large diamonds connected together the rows of pearls, while a diamond clasp, earrings, and a tiara of the same precious material, made the present worth at least thirty thousand crowns.

"Good heavens, father!" exclaimed Andrée.

"Well?"

"It is too handsome. The king has made some mistake. I should be ashamed to wear that. I have no dresses to match the splendor of these diamonds."

"Oh! complain of it, I beg!" said Taverney, ironically.

"You do not understand me, Monsieur. I regret that I cannot wear these jewels because they are too beautiful."

"The king, who gives the casket, Mademoiselle, is sufficiently the grand seigneur to add the dresses."

"But, Monsieur, this goodness on the king's part —"

"Do you not think I have deserved it by my services?"

"Ah! pardon me, Monsieur; that is true," said Andrée, drooping her head, but not quite convinced.

After a moment's reflection she closed the casket. "I shall not wear these diamonds," said she.

"And why not?" said Taverney, uneasily.

"Because, my dear father, you and my brother are in want of every necessity, and this superfluity offends my eyes when I think of your embarrassments."

Taverney smiled, and pressed her hand. "Oh!" said he, "do not think of that, my daughter. The king has

done more for me than for you. We are in favor, my dear child. It would neither be respectful as a subject nor grateful as a woman to appear before his Majesty without the present he has made you."

"I will obey, Monsieur."

"Yes, but you must obey as if it gave you pleasure to do so. These ornaments seem not to be to your taste."

"I am no judge of diamonds, Monsieur."

"Learn, then, that the pearls alone are worth fifty thousand francs."

Andrée clasped her hands. "Monsieur," said she, "it is most strange that his Majesty should make me such a present. Reflect!"

"I do not understand you, Mademoiselle," replied Taverney, dryly.

"If I wear these jewels, I assure you, Monsieur, every one will be greatly surprised."

"Why?" asked Taverney, in the same tone, and with a cold and imperious glance which made Andrée lower her eyes.

"I feel a scruple."

"Mademoiselle, you must confess that it is strange you should entertain scruples, when even I, your father, feel none. Give me your young modest girls for seeing evil and finding it out, however closely hidden it is, and when none other had remarked it! None like maidenly and simple girls for making old grenadiers like myself blush!"

Andrée hid her blushing face in her lovely white hands. "Oh! my brother," she murmured to herself, "why are you already so far away from me?"

Did Taverney hear these words, or did he divine their purport with that wonderful perspicacity which we know he possessed? We cannot tell; but he immediately changed his tone, and taking Andrée's hand in his,

"Come, my child," said he, "is not your father your friend?"

A sweet smile chased the shadow from Andrée's brow.

"Shall I not be here to love you, — to advise you? Are you not proud to contribute to my happiness and that of your brother?"

"Oh, yes!" said Andrée.

The baron fixed a caressing look upon his daughter.

"Well," said he, "you shall be, as Monsieur de Richelieu said just now, the queen of Taverney. The king has distinguished you, and the dauphiness also," added he, hastily. "In your intimacy with these two august personages, you will found our future fortunes by making them happy. The friend of the dauphiness and — of the king! What a glorious career! You have superior talents and unrivalled beauty, a pure and healthy mind, untainted by avarice and ambition. Oh, my child, what a part you might play! Do you remember the maiden who soothed the last moments of Charles VI.? Her name is cherished in France. Do you remember Agnes Sorel, who restored the honor of the French crown? All good Frenchmen respect her memory. Andrée, you will be the support of the old age of our glorious monarch. He will cherish you as his daughter, and you will reign in France by the divine right of beauty, courage, and fidelity!"

Andrée opened her eyes wide with astonishment. The baron resumed, without giving her time to reflect. "With a single look you will drive away these wretched creatures who dishonor the throne; your presence will purify the court. To your generous influence the nobility of the kingdom will owe the return of pure morals, politeness, and real gallantry. My daughter, you may be, you must be, the regenerating star of your country, and a crown of glory to your name."

"But," said Andrée, all bewildered, "what must I do to effect all this?"

The baron reflected for a moment. "Andrée," said he, "I have often told you that in this world you must force men to be virtuous by making them love virtue. Sullen, melancholy, sermonizing virtue makes even those fly who wish most to approach her. Lend to your virtue all the allurements of coquetry, — even of vice. It is an easy task for a talented and high-minded girl such as you are. Make yourself so lovely that the court will talk only of you; make yourself so agreeable to the king that he cannot do without you. Be so reserved and discreet toward all, except his Majesty, that people will soon attribute to you all that power which you cannot fail ultimately to obtain."

"I do not exactly understand your last advice," said Andrée.

"Trust yourself to my guidance; you will fulfil my wishes without understanding them, — the best plan for such a wise and generous creature as you are. But, by the by, to enable you to put in practice my first counsel, I must furnish your purse. Take these hundred louis-d'or and dress in a manner worthy of the rank to which you belong, since the king has done us the honor to distinguish us."

Taverney gave the hundred louis to his daughter, kissed her hand, and left her. He returned with rapid steps along the alley by which he had come, so much engrossed in his reflections that he did not perceive Nicole in close conference with a nobleman at the extremity of the Bosquet des Amours.